

# *La Cienega and La Cieneguilla* *Community Plan*



Adopted by the Santa Fe County Board of County Commissioners  
Via Resolution 2001-117 on August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2001

*Prepared By The*  
*La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Planning Committee*  
*1997 – 2001*

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## **PART 1 - INTRODUCTION**

The Valley of La Cienega is comprised of Lower La Cienega, Upper La Cienega and La Cieneguilla and surrounding areas. These villages share many traditional similarities and have worked together through discussion, education, listening and negotiation to create a community plan that encourages sensible growth. The La Cienega Valley Association (LCVA) was the organizing body that initiated and supported the development of this Plan.

### **VISION STATEMENT:**

The vision for our community is one of a peaceful and rural nature, one that respects diversity and is governed through unity. We resolve to protect our natural environment and unique character by honoring our traditional culture and the area's historical, agricultural, livestock and rural low density residential development traditions. We wish to maintain our self-sufficiency and protect our community from urban sprawl. We wish to live in a community where people of all cultures and incomes share in decision making; a community in which any changes, improvements and decisions are dictated by realistic understanding of our available resources and by our vision of our relaxed and open quality of life.

*The citizens of Upper La Cienega, Lower La Cienega and La Cieneguilla adopt this vision statement to serve as the guiding principle for the creation of this plan.*

**A Brief History of the Planning Area:**

The history of the La Cienega Valley and its the traditional historic communities of La Cienega and La Cieneguilla date back thousands of years. As the name *cienega* (Spanish for marsh) implies, the La Cienega Valley contains marshlands formed by natural springs that have attracted passersby and settlers since well before the time of Christ. Recently, an archeological survey was conducted on approximately 250 acres of land comprising El Rancho de Las Golondrinas in the heart of La Cienega. This survey yielded 51 archaeological sites ranging from camp sites of the Archaic Period five thousand years ago to ruins of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century school house. This high level of archeological site density is indicative of adjacent lands up and down the valley, which leads us to believe that our valley has more concentrations of historic occupation than any other area in the Santa Fe vicinity.

The oldest traces of human use can be found on the slopes overlooking the numerous springs in the area. The mesa escarpments are dotted with petroglyphs and rock etchings that date as far back as three thousand years, when American Indians took advantage of the ever present water so vital to us even today. About the time of Christ, people began living in pit houses presumably on a year round basis. Over the centuries, people began the transition of living in surface structures made of puddled adobe or stone, or a combination of both. At the time of Spanish contact in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, there was mention of at least two considerably large Indian Pueblos in the La Cienega Valley referred to as “La Cienega” and “La Cieneguilla”. La Cienega continued to be inhabited through the 17<sup>th</sup> century by Tano Indians. La Cieneguilla was abandoned by the Keres Indians in the early 1600’s but subsequently reoccupied by the Spanish in the 1630’s. The location of the Cieneguilla Pueblo is in the present village of La Cieneguilla whose mesas are adorned with petroglyphs inscribed over thousands of years. The location of the Indian Pueblo of La Cienega has still not been definitely identified, although two or three possibilities exist. It is, however, assumed to be located within the Traditional Community of La Cienega.

The earliest known Spanish settlement in the valley is the ‘Sanchez Site’ otherwise known as LA 20,000 dating from 1630 to the time of the Pueblo Revolt in 1680. It is a very important site located in the southern part of the valley that was partially excavated in the 1980’s and is now owned and protected by El Rancho de Las Golondrinas. Other pre-revolt estancias are known to have existed at that time, although none have been located.

While the communities of La Cienega and La Cieneguilla are both located within the La Cienega Valley, the Spanish settlement of each village was very different. La Cienega rapidly increased in population due to the fact that common lands were easily settled. La Cieneguilla started out as a private Spanish Land Grant. The original grantee, Francisco Anaya De Almazan, was conferred title to over three thousand acres by Don Diego De Vargas in 1693. Extensive settlement of La Cieneguilla did not occur until some 50 years after the Anaya De Almazan family sold the grant.

After the Spanish Reconquest in 1692 and throughout the Spanish Colonial period, various place names are recorded for a number of ranchos in the La Cienega Valley including “Guicú”, “Los Tanques”, “Las Golondrinas”, “El Alamo”, “La Capilla Vieja” and “El Cañon”. The springs that seep throughout the valley made these areas very desirable for ranching and grazing. In addition, El Rancho de las Golondrinas was a major *paraje* (stopping place) on the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro serving as the first stop leaving Santa Fe when traveling south and the last stop for travelers before entering Santa Fe coming north. Even today, remains of the trail ruts can still be seen in the La Cienega Valley. The names of the

early Spanish settlers are ones that are prevalent today in the valley: Baca, Bustamante, C' de Baca, Delgado, Gonzales, Montoya, Ortiz, Perea, Pino, Rael, Romero, and Sanchez to name a few.

The La Cienega Valley continued to be used for farming and ranching in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and up to the present. The valley was a busy place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as reflected in the census of the time. By World War II, with the development of better roads, motor vehicle travel enabled the economy of the La Cienega Valley to change. More and more people found work in Santa Fe and families sent their children there for schooling. By the early 1980's, the settlement patterns of La Cienega and La Cieneguilla were changing dramatically; more affordable land was located in this part of the Santa Fe area where families could live. The area was caught in an incredible surge of residential development, creating many changes in the cultural landscape of the valley.

What does this all mean? It means that the La Cienega Valley has always been a desirable place for people to live, raise their families, grow their crops, graze their livestock and welcome strangers. It means that we in the valley have become stewards of a cultural landscape that has nurtured our forebears and welcomed *recien emigrados* (recent émigrés) to the valley for centuries. It means we have a responsibility to preserve as best we can the lay of the land, the water and its traditions, while at the same time allowing controlled growth to take place that respects one's neighbors.

*The history section was researched and written by members of the Community Planning Committee*

**The Community Plan:**

As unincorporated communities throughout Santa Fe County have experienced rapid growth over the past two decades, the Board of County Commissioners and community members have begun planning to address the issues that result from the changes. In 1996, the Board of County Commissioners requested that the Land Use Department and Planning Division begin working to help Traditional Communities and Contemporary Communities develop local land use plans. Santa Fe County Ordinance 1998-5, which is known as the Community Planning Ordinance, describes the process for conducting community plans and provides for County staff to assist communities in developing plans.

In order to deal with the inevitable changes and plan for the future, the residents of La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area have worked together to create the following community plan. This Plan represents the product of countless hours of volunteer time from community members, friends and neighbors that was spent in meetings, discussions, disagreements and friendly conversations regarding how these communities will best be able to direct future development. This Plan is submitted as a blueprint or guide for the future of the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area.

Community planning is a process where residents, business owners, and property owners in La Cienega and La Cieneguilla have examined their town and decided what and how change can best be directed to support and protect community resources. Planning is both solving problems as well as expressing a clear vision for the future. The La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Plan is the result of the community identifying a common set of concerns, goals that address these concerns, and then create clear policies to achieve the goals for future development in the community.

For example, planning in La Cienega and La Cieneguilla must be consistent with the community's history and the ways that past planning efforts have shaped the area. The planning process must include the opinions and ideas of residents, business owners and property owners in order to be representative of the community. The process involves looking at issues that all community members may not agree on but have a shared interest in addressing. Planning requires an open and inclusive dialogue so that all voices are heard and included.

**Benefits of Planning**

Community Planning is a means for unincorporated communities like La Cienega and La Cieneguilla to have a voice about future development and growth. Once the Board of County Commissioners adopts a plan, future developments within the Community Planning Area Boundary will reflect the specific vision, goals, and actions laid out in the plan.

The Plan is a guide that includes input from local residents, business owners, property owners and County staff. The Plan helps to inform the Board of County Commissioners and the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Development Review Committee considering development proposals in the planning area. Programs and projects proposed in an adopted plan will be considered for funding through County programs such as the Infrastructure Capital Improvements Program (ICIP). The community planning process is not static and plans can be amended as new conditions arise, allowing for the community plan to evolve over time as the community changes.

**The Community Planning Process:**

Santa Fe County’s Community Planning process and ordinance allows for local community groups to request assistance in developing community plans. The La Cienega Valley Association (LCVA) was formed in 1995. With the draft of the City of Santa Fe’s General Plan calling for expansion of their urban boundary, the citizens feared imminent annexation into the city limits. The LCVA approached the County to request that a community planning process be initiated in the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla. At the Board of County Commissioners meeting on March 11, 1997, the LCVA requested permission to proceed with a community plan and outlined initial planning boundaries. The group was instructed to survey residents within the proposed boundaries to seek their approval of inclusion in a Plan. County Planning Division staff began working with the LCVA and other community members to develop a plan for the area.

A substantial amount of time was spent in reaching agreement on the outline of how our communities should proceed. Issues that impacted one or more village area were included in the outline for the planning process shown below. Committees were formed with citizens who were interested in working on each specific topic and County staff provided both technical and organizational assistance.

**Establishment of the Planning Boundary:**

The physical boundaries of the Planning Area are designed to recognize the traditional uses of the land and how development would impact the communities. The 1980 Santa Fe County General Plan delineated a Traditional Community Zoning District, which is the core of the Plan area. Proposed expansion of the City of Santa Fe and possible annexation of the Planning Area’s communities threatened many of the grazing lands and open lands connecting the villages which are crucial to the fabric of the communities. Through discussion by the Planning Committee, historic and rural importance was assigned to these areas. A proposed Planning Area Boundary was developed at a public meeting of the LCVA. The boundary follows the upper edge of the La Bajada escarpment on the south, follows topographic features and County Road 56 C to the west and north, the southern airport boundary and NM State Highway 599 to the north and east, and Interstate 25 to the east and south.

**Community Survey:**

Following the creation of the Planning Boundary, a survey was mailed to community residents to receive feedback on the proposed planning area as well as ask residents about important planning issues. The survey was mailed out in January 1998. Responses from the survey supported the proposed planning boundary and included comments on important planning issues including: water resource management; noise from the airport; dogs running loose; poorly maintained roads; too much traffic and cars traveling too fast on local roads; un-enforced covenants and lax code enforcement; poor garbage service; sewer treatment plant impacts on local water resources; and over development in the area.

**Planning Meetings:**

A Planning Committee was formed and met on a regular basis. The group was made up of volunteers from the community who drafted initial language for the community plan. The Planning Committee was designed to be representative of the communities of the Planning Area including Upper and Lower La Cienega and La Cieneguilla. All meetings of the Planning Committee were open to the public. Meetings and activities of the Planning Committee were periodically announced through mailings, phone calls, bulletin boards and posted signs throughout the Planning Area. Meetings were held at the La Cienega Community Center.

The primary topics addressed were: water, land use and growth management, infrastructure, traffic and community facilities. A draft document was submitted to the County for review in March 1998 and beginning in November, County Planning staff began to regularly attend meetings to serve as a technical advisor and facilitator. Regular meetings of the Planning Committee were held from 1999 through 2001. Additionally, in 1999 and early 2000, Planning Committee members held twice monthly open house meetings on Sunday afternoons at the community center to receive public comment and input from community members who were unable to attend regular planning meetings.

**Action Policies and Implementation:**

The La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Plan is essentially a partnership between the communities and the County to help tailor land use and services to best fit with existing conditions in the Planning Area. The Plan establishes policies that can be enacted through ordinances or implemented through programs and projects. The Plan will serve as an amendment to both the County's Growth Management Plan as well as to the County Land Development Code. Additionally, the Plan incorporates and supports the Highway Corridor Plan, specifically in regard to the La Cienega Corridor section.

**Ordinance Actions:**

Ordinance actions are policies developed through the planning process which will change the County Land Development Code. The ordinance actions will be adopted by the Board of County Commissioners as a set of legally binding regulations specifically for the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area. Thus, an ordinance action will change what is allowed or not allowed on individual properties within the Planning Area. The County is responsible for enforcement of all ordinances.

**Program Actions:**

Program actions outline proposed future programming or projects that the Community Plan identifies as important work to be addressed in the community. These actions are not proposed ordinances and do not outline any legal changes for land use or future development in the community. Program actions describe various actions that are important for future planning and development in the area. The community is responsible for working with the County and various agencies mentioned to initiate the program actions.

### **Implementation and Responsibilities**

The Planning Division of Santa Fe County’s Land Use Department is the lead agency responsible for both assisting the residents of the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area in the creation of this plan as well as for helping the community coordinate implementation of the various actions outlined in the Plan. The actions contained herein are designed to address specific issues identified as important aspects of future development in the planning Area. In Part 12, there is a listing of various agencies and organizations that may be involved in implementing many of the program actions listed in the Plan.

Upon final adoption of a set of ordinances for the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Planning Area, the County is responsible for enforcement of the ordinances contained in the Plan. It is important to note that neither the County nor the various agencies listed in the Plan are directly committing resources for the specific program actions outlined. However, the County recognizes the importance of the many projects and programs listed in this plan. The County is committed to assisting the Planning Area’s communities in addressing these problems or needs and in finding locally appropriate solutions.

The Planning Division will work with representative community organizations to coordinate both planning and implementation of the Plan’s many actions. The La Cienega Valley Association (LCVA) has served as the lead community group in helping to organize and develop this plan. However, the County recognizes that the LCVA is not the only community group in the Planning Area and does not imply that the LCVA would be responsible to implement all of the actions listed herein. Throughout the Plan, reference is made to the “community” working with the Planning Division and other agencies to implement program actions. The County will collaborate with the “community” through existing and any newly created representative bodies or community organizations in a collaborative, consensual process to address the program actions called for in the Plan.

The Community Plan is intended as an active document that can and should be updated as conditions change throughout the Planning Area. Additionally, it is recognized that the Plan may be tailored to include specific concerns and conditions in smaller geographic areas within the Planning Area boundary, such as La Cieneguilla, Upper La Cienega and Lower La Cienega. The following provides a description of how the Plan may be amended in the future.

### **Plan Contents:**

The focus of the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Plan is on supporting responsible development in the Planning Area that is appropriate level, scale and intensity to match the rural character of the area and its communities. The plan covers water quantity, water quality and wastewater, open space, agricultural lands, roads, fire protection, utilities, land use and the airport among other issues. The following sections outline specific ordinance and program actions to help solve problems as well as direct development that will help maintain the rural character of the communities of La Cienega and La Cieneguilla in the future.

**General Summary of Current County Zoning:**

The following is provided as a basic outline of Santa Fe County zoning regulations to help readers better understand the relationship between land use, zoning and water resources.

Under the County's Land Development Code, land division is based on hydrologic zones. The Code defines basic lot sizes for these zones as follows:

- Traditional Community Zoning District - 1 dwelling per .75 acres
  - Basin zone - 1 dwelling unit is allowed per every 10 acres
  - Basin Fringe zone - 1 dwelling unit is allowed per 50 acres \*
  - Homestead zone - 1 dwelling unit is allowed per every 160 acres \*
- 
- If a property owner wishes to divide a parcel, densities can be increased a maximum of 4 times if an adequate 100 year supply of water is proven on site by hydrogeological tests and if water conservation covenants are duly applied. This is not permitted in the Traditional Community Zoning District where .75 acre lots are the smallest lot size allowed, unless community water and sewer is utilized.

*\* In the Homestead and Basin Fringe zones it is also possible to divide tracts into 2.5 acre lots if there is a proven, available 100 year water supply.*

- **Current Minimum Lot Sizes in the Planning Area:**

The minimum lots sizes for dwelling units on existing legal lots of record in the Planning area are as follows:

- Traditional Community Zoning District - 1 dwelling per .75 acres
- Basin zone - 1 dwelling unit is allowed per every 2.5 acres
- Basin Fringe zone - 1 dwelling unit is allowed per 12.5 acres
- Homestead zone - 1 dwelling unit is allowed per every 40 acres.

**Small-lot Family Transfers:**

The small-lot family transfer allows for the potential to further divide lots to half the minimum lot sizes listed above, except in the Traditional Community Zoning District. The small-lot family transfer division does not require proof of water availability under the current county code.

## **PART 2 - WATER QUANTITY**

### **Introduction:**

For centuries, the availability of water in the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla valleys has been a primary factor for area settlement by Indigenous American, Spanish, Mexican, Territorial and United States settlers. Surface water is found in springs, streams and rivers that also create the *cienegas* or marshes for which the area is named. Surface water has traditionally been used for domestic purposes, to water livestock, power mills and irrigate crops.

By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, domestic use of the streams, rivers and *acequias* or ditches was discontinued due to contamination and depletion of the waters. Household consumption from springs continued because they were easier to keep clean but there are now few if any remaining springs with sufficient quantity of flow to support a home. Following World War II, most valley households began replacing spring boxes with conventional wells, electric pumps and pressure tanks. The proliferation of water wells has been a major factor in altering the character of the valley communities. Traditional land and water use for agricultural purposes are being rapidly replaced by commercial and residential development.

Agriculture in the Planning Area is sustained by traditional spring fed *acequias*. The *ojos y ojitos* or natural springs fill ponds formed by construction of earthen dams to contain water that can then be directed into an *acequia*. These gravity fed *acequia* systems have remained basically unaltered for centuries. By the 1990's greatly diminished flows of area springs necessitated the addition of supplemental ground water from wells in order to maintain flows and *acequia* system integrity.

Due to growth in the Planning Area and particularly of upstream communities in the greater Santa Fe area, substantial mining of the aquifer is occurring. In the County, the density of land development is directly tied to the availability of water, yet the granting of variances and density bonuses for water conservation covenants has led to an increasing number of institutional, commercial and domestic wells that draw water from the watershed. The combined effect of aquifer mining throughout the watershed as well as increased local demand for water has created a serious threat to water resources in the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area. (See Map 4)

One of the primary aims of this plan is the protection, balanced management and recharge of water resources throughout the entire La Cienega and La Cieneguilla watershed. While this Plan is applicable to the established Planning Area, it must be recognized that the water resources of the valleys are intrinsically tied to the entire watershed. This includes large developed areas of the City of Santa Fe and Santa Fe County as well as areas planned for future development including the Community College District. Thus, the Plan applies the full range of powers and resources of Santa Fe County, as the local governing body, to implement watershed protection, management and recharge initiatives in conjunction with all public and private entities throughout the watershed.

**La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Planning Area Water Resources:**

- **Acequia Associations:**

There are three acequia associations and several private acequias in the valley that provide water for irrigation. According to a hydrographic survey of the area completed by the State Engineer's Office in 1976, approximately 150 acres of land are potentially irrigable by community acequias.

La Acequia de La Cienega delivers water to 98.6 acres of irrigated land of which approximately 40 acres are currently being farmed. Some of the acreage traditionally used for irrigation has been developed for other purposes; some of it lies fallow. The acequia is entitled to use approximately 294 acre feet of water per year (one acre foot equals approximately 325,800 gallons of water). However, due to dramatic declines in water flow from the springs that feed the acequia, a ground water well has been employed since 1998 to provide a supplemental water source to maintain the ditch integrity. La Acequia de El Guicú traditionally serves approximately 41 acres for irrigation, however, the acequia currently irrigates approximately 25 acres. The El Guicú is entitled to approximately 123 ac. ft of water per year. La Acequia de El Molino (also known as the La Acequia de La Capilla) is the third ditch in the valley and has approximately 6 users irrigating approximately 15 acres. There are also four private acequias in the valley: the El Cañon, La Capilla Vieja, Los Pinos, and Romero ditches.

The mayordomos of the primary acequias, La Cienega and El Guicú, report that it is currently not possible to supply water to all of the potentially irrigable acres along their acequias due to low spring flows. Residents report that one of the reasons for a decline in local agricultural production is the lack of adequate and reliable water flows in the acequias. The draw down of water supplies throughout the watershed is believed to be a primary reason for low flows but no governmental or non-governmental agencies have conducted adequate studies to illustrate aquifer depletion and potential impairments to date. (See Map 3)

- **La Cienega Mutual Domestic Water System:**

The La Cienega Mutual Domestic Water Association (LCMDWA) was founded in the early 1970's and serves a large portion of Lower La Cienega. In 2000, the LCMDWA serves approximately 190 people with connections to 112 households and has a system capacity that could accommodate 25 additional meter hook ups. The domestic water system uses approximately 21.7 acre feet of water per year. In order to become a member of the system, one must contribute .27 acre feet of ground water rights to the LCMDWA. The membership cost in 2001 include a one-time \$425 start-up fee plus the cost of hooking the system to one's home. User fees are \$19 per month for up to 4,000 gallons per month plus an additional fee for consumption over that amount. plus hook-up costs. The LCMDWA does not have capacity for commercial use hook-ups and provides limited capacity for fire protection. (See Map 5)

- **County Water System:**

The Santa Fe County water system currently extends to the Las Lagunitas subdivision on the Southeast side of the Community Planning Area. In an agreement with the La Cienega Valley Association, Las Lagunitas' developer has installed fire protection lines and a fire hydrant on Entrada La Cienega to a point approximately ¼ mile before the intersection of Paseo C' de Baca. Plans are currently being developed to extend County water service along the road as well as provide a new connection of the system to the La Cienega Community Center and may also provide possible back-up for the LCMDWA system in the future. Additionally, preliminary discussions have begun to explore the possibility of extending the County water system across Interstate 25 to the vicinity of Upper La Cienega and the Santa Fe Downs area as well as options for water line extensions in the La Cieneguilla area. If County water lines are extended in the Planning Area and if residents would like to connect to the county system, residents would probably be required to donate offsetting water rights to the County system and pay for some portion of the line extension costs as well as hook-up the system to their homes. Currently, the County employs a policy within the La Cienega Watershed that requires all land division applicants within the La Cienega watershed to accept the La Cienega Watershed Conditions as part of the land division. These conditions require connection to the county water utility system when it is within 200 feet of the property line of the parcel being divided.

Water availability and lowered flows in springs within the Planning Area are a major concern to community members, acequia associations and water users in the Planning Area. The County is working to expand its water system and is in the process of acquiring water rights and wells near the Planning Area. The expansion of the County water system will help to provide service to residents and businesses in the Planning Area as well as in areas adjacent to the Planning Area. La Cienega and La Cieneguilla residents are concerned that expansion of the County's water system may further impact local water resources. As part of expansion of the water system, the County is committed to working directly with Planning Area residents to investigate and implement aquifer recharge measures and to using imported water for the County water system to the extent that is feasible and productive to recharging the local aquifer. The County intends to pursue aquifer management to achieve a sustainable groundwater supply and will work to reduce pumping of wells near the Planning Area.

The County is committed to utilizing existing water rights through the City water system and to moving forward with water importation to further alleviate use of wells near the Planning Area. The County is committed to participating in a public process to work with the communities of La Cienega and La Cieneguilla to develop plans to limit water drawn from the Planning Area and in the watersheds which impact area acequias. This will include working directly with the Planning Area residents in developing a 40 year water plan for the County water utility that addresses: a.) recharge of the area aquifer; b.) reduced pumping of County held wells in or near the Planning Area; c.) planning future expansion of the county water system to manage withdrawals from wells near the Planning Area to achieve a sustainable groundwater supply and recharge of the area aquifer to prevent or mitigate mining of the aquifer; d.) investigating and actively pursuing other points of diversion that would reduce impact on the Planning Area; e.) investigating and pursuing the possibility of using effluent to supplement acequia flows, and; f.) coordinating a cooperative process with the community and all water interests to minimize impacts of future water use on the Planning Area.

- **Private Water Wells:**

Throughout the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Planning Area, homes and businesses receive domestic water from private sources. In the Upper La Cienega area and parts of La Cieneguilla, many residences share wells with anywhere from 2-5 homes per well. Aside from the community water system mentioned above and the shared wells, the majority of residences in the Planning Area receive their domestic water from private wells while several homes still draw drinking water from a spring.

**Problems:**

1. Limited water is available to meet domestic and agricultural needs in the Planning Area. Continued approval of development applications in the Planning Area creates an atmosphere where many local residents feel as if they are forced to compete with new developments for limited water resources. As a result, many residents oppose new development. This serves to hinder all potential development, regardless of scale and leads to community division rather than coordinated planning for development that is determined to be appropriate by local residents.
2. The Community Planning Committee has identified that the County does not consistently enforce density requirements based on water availability within the Planning Area. Dwellings have been permitted in the Community Planning Area without regard to approved water resource estimates.
3. Planning Area residents have identified that property division through family transfer splits and variances are being used to divide properties below the minimum lots sizes. These newly subdivided lots are often developed for rental or sale. This allows for increased density on small lots which places new demands on local water resources to accommodate the new development. While the community supports the family transfer process, it is felt that more careful examination of the potential impacts of increased densities on local water resources is necessary before variances are granted.
4. Large commercial and institutional entities in or near the Community Planning Area are high volume water users. The high volume use threatens the limited water resources in the Planning Area as well as the La Cienega and Santa Fe River watersheds. Public records at the State Engineer's Office (SEO) have documented instances of water use exceeding permitted rights for both institutional and commercial entities in or near the Planning Area.
5. Both wells and water rights that affect water resources in the Planning Area and the La Cienega and Santa Fe River watersheds have been actively sought by the City of Santa Fe, the County and private entities. Use of these water resources would further draw down local water supplies. Without adequate protections for local water resources, continued draw down and aquifer mining in the La Cienega and Santa Fe River watersheds threatens to deplete or impair existing water resources for Planning Area residents.

6. The Traditional Community District of La Cienega currently has more users drawing water through private wells than the recommended density based on the critical population estimates outlined in the 1980 County General Plan. The critical population estimates were established to define a maximum population carrying capacity for local water resources but were removed from the County's 1999 Growth Management Plan. The current Code and General Plan both state that when these critical population limits are reached, planning should occur for centralized sewer and water systems in the Traditional Community in order to accommodate the increased population. Continued development in the area without regard to the limited water supplies threatens the Planning Area and watershed surface and ground water resources of all communities in the Planning Area.
7. Documentation of aquifer drawdown as demonstrated by decreased stream flows of La Acequia de La Cienega are presented in a 1994 report by W. Fleming that was commissioned by the County. The Fleming Report clearly states that the aquifer is being depleted as evidenced by the dropping water flow from springs between 1966 and 1994. Residents confirm these dramatic decreases in spring flows over the past three decades. The County does not recognize the Fleming Report's findings regarding water use in the valley yet has not developed any documentation to refute these findings. Aside from USGS monitoring of La Acequia de La Cienega, no data collection systems are in place to measure and document actual impacts to La Cienega and La Cieneguilla area water supplies.

**Goals:**

- Ensure that an adequate quantity of surface and ground water is available for domestic and agricultural use in the Planning Area.
- Collection and analysis of both demographic and hydrographic information to help guide development decisions in the Planning Area and the La Cienega and Santa Fe River watersheds.
- Decrease aquifer depletion in the Planning Area and La Cienega and Santa Fe River watersheds.
- Implementation of water conservation throughout the Planning Area and La Cienega and Santa Fe River watersheds.
- Periodic monitoring of water use to limit ground water depletion and over consumption.
- Ensure that actual water resources and the rights thereof remain in the Planning Area communities.
- Ensure the maximum potential level of safe recharge of the aquifer.
- Ensure that senior water rights in the Planning Area are not violated.

**Actions:**

***Ordinance Actions:***

*The following actions are aimed at specifically changing the County Land Development Code through the creation of legally binding regulations that will be specific to the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area*

- A. All new commercial land division in the Planning Area will be required to connect to the County water system when the system is extended to within 200 feet of the property line, provided that adequate capacity exists in the system and that taps are available. If connection to the County water system is not possible, the development must limit water consumption to .35 acre feet (approximately 114,030 gallons) of water per year per acre of the tract. This water consumption requirement applies only to use of water for commercial purposes from domestic wells as defined by the state and does not apply to any other water rights (irrigation or private). This policy requires separation of water systems to ensure that the public system is not subject to potential contamination from individual systems but does not require capping of wells. The requirement for new land divisions to connect to the County water system or a community water system when the system reaches within 200 feet of the property line, so long as there is adequate capacity in the system for new connections, will be applied with the following conditions:
- 1) If the water system is already in place and capable of providing service or if the County can provide an estimated time of completion of six (6) months or less, connection to the system will be required immediately.
  - 2) If the County cannot provide an estimated time for waterline completion and capacity for service of six (6) months or less, the new land division will be granted a 5 year grace period from the time the water line is actually installed before the agreement to connect to the system will be effective.
- The policy to require connection to a water system is currently employed by the County for all land divisions, including family transfers, and other subdivisions of land in under the La Cienega Watershed Conditions. The proposed policy allows for a grace period to ensure that people who wish to develop are given due notice of estimated time competition for any water line extension in order that they will be able to appropriately plan for development needs and expenditures when developing their property.
- B. All new residential land division using ground water shall limit water consumption to .25 acre feet of water per year for domestic consumption. This will include all indoor and outdoor household water use. All new residential development may apply for permission to consume up to an additional .50 acre feet of water per year for domestic purposes. The application for additional water consumption shall be required only once, either when the land is divided or when the property owner wishes to request additional consumption. Therefore, the maximum possible residential water use will be .75 acre feet of water per year. The extra water use must be applied for with a water budget and proof of 100 year water supply as per the existing County Land Development Code. The policy to limit water consumption on new land divisions is currently employed by the County for all land divisions, including family transfers, and other subdivisions of land under the La Cienega Watershed Conditions. This water consumption requirement applies only to use of water for domestic purposes from domestic wells as defined by the state and does not apply to any other water rights (irrigation or private).

- C. All land division and zoning density variance applications in the Planning Area shall be granted only if the applicant provides a site-specific hydrogeological report that demonstrates a 100 year water supply and which assess the impact of the new well on neighboring wells, acequias, streams, ponds and springs. A summary of the hydrogeological reports must be mailed to all property owners adjacent to the property proposed for division or variance request as a part of the public noticing process to inform neighbors of potential water impacts to existing wells and surface water. The policy to require proof of water availability is currently employed by the County for all land divisions, including family transfers, and other subdivisions of land in Article VII, Section 6.4 of the County Land Development Code.
- D. All new residential subdivision development located within 200 feet of either the Santa Fe County Water System or a community water system shall be required to connect to that system, provided that adequate capacity exists in the system and that water taps are available. If hook-up to either type of system is not possible, new residential development of two or more lots on 2.5 acre parcels or less will be required to share a well with the adjoining new lot, providing adequate water is available for both lots. The policy to require connection to a water system is currently employed by the County for all land divisions, including family transfers, and other subdivisions of land under the La Cienega Watershed Conditions. This policy requires separation of water systems to ensure that the public system is not subject to potential contamination from individual systems but does not require capping of wells. The requirement for new land divisions to connect to the County water system or a community water system when the system reaches within 200 feet of the property line, so long as there is adequate capacity in the system for new connections, will be applied with the following conditions:
- 1) If the water system is already in place and capable of providing service or if the County can provide an estimated time of completion of six (6) months or less, connection to the system will be required immediately.
  - 2) If the County cannot provide an estimated time for waterline completion and capacity for service of six (6) months or less, the new land division will be granted a 5 year grace period from the time the water line is actually installed before the agreement to connect to the system will be effective.
- The policy to require connection to a water system is currently employed by the County for all land divisions, including family transfers, and other subdivisions of land in under the La Cienega Watershed Conditions. The proposed policy allows for a grace period to ensure that people who wish to develop are given due notice of estimated time competition for any water line extension in order that they will be able to appropriately plan for development needs and expenditures when developing their property.
- E. As per existing state and county requirements, all new wells and buildings using groundwater drawn from wells located within the Planning Area as a partial or total water supply must install a water meter on their wells. All new development using shared wells or community water systems must install a water meter on every dwelling unit or primary structure/intake that uses the well water.
- F. All development in the Planning Area that is required to install a water meter shall monitor and record water meter readings on a monthly basis and submit an annual report of monthly readings to the County Hydrologist. The community will coordinate with the County Hydrologist to develop a water meter auditing program to ensure compliance with water restriction covenants. If a user is over consuming, the County will work with the individual to 1) develop a water budget and conservation plan including efforts to replace any amount over consumed and, 2) develop a fine for repeated instances of over consumption.

- G. All new development shall incorporate water conservation and management practices which are compliant with state and county regulations. This may include reuse of gray water, storm water recharge and rainwater collection systems such as, cisterns, gravel beds or other storage systems for which regulations have been enacted. To the extent that it is practical and affordable and not to exceed 1% of total construction costs, collected water shall be used for landscaping irrigation and/or other domestic uses in order to replace use of potable water supplies. The County shall develop an informational packet that outlines practical and affordable water collection practices for distribution with all development permits.
- H. Xeriscaping and/or native plants will be encouraged for landscaping on all new landscaping. The area of landscaping to be irrigated will be based on County Hydrologist approved water budget estimates of rainwater collection and storage capacity per the individual development. This will not apply to agricultural uses of water.
- I. The building of swimming pools is discouraged in the Community Planning Area. Any new pool must meet County water conservation guidelines, water availability requirements and include a covering when not in use to minimize evaporation.
- J. Prior to development of new riparian areas and wetlands in the Planning Area, applicants shall demonstrate adequate water rights and/or source(s) of water to meet consumptive needs of the riparian area or wetlands, and that the project will not negatively impact prior beneficial uses or traditional uses of water resources, in accordance with State Engineer's Office regulations. All such projects shall also comply with all County Code requirements including, without limitation, terrain management. Projects may also be subject to monitoring, which will be designed on a case-by-case basis, to ensure that the water rights associated with the project are not exceeded, and to address any possible negative impacts associated with the project. Additionally, a public process for community input shall be required for any such projects proposed in the Planning Area.

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***Program Actions:***

*The following actions describe future programming or projects that the Community Plan identifies as important work to be addressed in the community. These are not proposed ordinances and do not outline any legal changes for land use or future development in the community.*

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- A. The community will work with the County Planning Division, Utilities Division, Hydrologist and other relevant county state, federal and non-governmental agencies to:
  - 1) ensure that commercial and institutional entities with on-site wells in or adjacent to the Planning Area connect to the County water system at the earliest possible date. When possible, existing on-site wells should be retired or dedicated for emergency uses only, such as fire protection or in the event that the County Water system should fail.
  - 2) extend the County water system, at the earliest possible date, to the area near the intersection of NM 599 and I-25 in order to serve both new and existing households and non-residential well users in the Upper la Cienega area. This will include working with residents in connecting subdivisions and households that have requirements to connect to a public system when possible as part of plat approvals.

- 3) investigate sources of supplemental water to use for irrigation. Sources might include water harvesting and/or other reuse initiatives such as treated effluent from the City of Santa Fe's wastewater treatment plant, the State penitentiary and/or National Guard facility as well as commercial, institutional and residential developments in or near the Community Planning Area. Effluent must be treated to conform to the federal and state standards. Such effluent should be periodically tested by a certified laboratory and test results should be provided in a timely manner. This Plan does not support direct injection of effluent into the aquifer and such a process should be used only if it can be demonstrated that the process would protect water sources from contamination and from other adverse impacts to ground water supplies.
  - 4) develop accurate population estimates for the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Planning Area. These population figures will be used in conjunction with a water budget for the Planning area to determine potential population impacts on local water resources and the development of realistic water availability estimates to guide future land use decisions. This study shall be completed no more than 3 years from the date that the Plan is adopted.
  - 5) develop water conservation and protection initiatives at all commercial facilities within and adjacent to the Community Planning Area.
  - 6) ensure that water users and all new utility, institutional, residential and commercial developments in the La Cienega and Santa Fe River watersheds will incorporate a balanced aquifer approach in the development of water sources. This should include use of imported water, aquifer storage and recovery, recharge with adequately treated effluent, protection of recharge zones, and limiting production of ground water in order that withdrawals be balanced with a sustainable level of recharge. These policies will be based upon the best available data and should be considered as necessary aspects of all development approvals in the Planning Area and in the La Cienega and Santa Fe River watersheds.
- B. The community will coordinate with the State Engineer's Office to:
- 1) develop a monitoring and notification program within the Planning Area to inform all water rights holders of proposed initiatives and activities that may impact and or potentially impair all water rights in and / or associated with the Planning Area
  - 2) monitor water rights retirement schedules and to ensure that compliance with said schedules is enforced for all water rights derived from the Community Planning Area.
  - 3) investigate whether Return Flow Credits (RFC) can be credited to the community. If possible, the LCVA and/or other interested community organizations will work with the County Planning Division to develop a community-wide program to apply RFC's to community water projects such as community water systems and acequia systems.
- C. The community will:
- 1) coordinate with the La Cienega Mutual Domestic Water Association (LCMDWA) to leverage community resources to acquire transferable water rights in the Planning Area and apply such water rights to the expansion of existing or creation of new community water systems.
  - 2) inventory transferable water rights in the Planning Area and when possible, develop a voluntary notification process with the water right owners to arrange a preferential right of purchase for these water rights in order that they may continue to serve as a community resource.
  - 3) coordinate with the acequia associations, the La Cienega Mutual Domestic Water Association, residents, business owners and property owners to expand water conservation initiatives within the community by providing educational materials and practical examples of water conservation techniques that can be employed in the Planning Area

## **PART 3 - WATER QUALITY AND WASTEWATER**

### **Introduction:**

Rapid growth inside and outside of the Planning Area has caused an increasingly large volume of wastewater effluent to be released in the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Planning Area. Latrines and cesspools were the traditional wastewater systems in the area. Septic tanks and drain fields to treat increasingly higher volumes of wastewater in the valleys have gradually replaced these systems.

The modernization of wastewater treatment systems has provided limited improvements to water quality in the Planning Area. The large number of private septic systems with varying degrees of system integrity creates a threat to the area's water quality through contamination from wastewater effluents.

Additionally, effluent from the City of Santa Fe's wastewater treatment plant is released into the Santa Fe River near La Cieneguilla. The location of the municipal wastewater treatment plant increases the volume of effluent released in the community. Effluent released from the plant benefits downstream irrigators and provides semi-consistent flows in the river to replace the flow from area springs which are now virtually depleted. This benefit to irrigators does not appear to extend to the Upper and Lower La Cienega area acequias or springs and as noted in the previous section, much of the effluent is derived from areas above these acequias and springs but the current release point does not serve to provide recharge benefits. Finally, community members have expressed serious reservations as to the consistency of facility operations as well as the potential for effluent and other operation by-product contamination of water resources in the Planning Area. Thus, the potential benefits of effluent to recharge aquifers in the entire Planning Area should be explored and must be balanced with clean and safe procedures to protect area water resources.

Neither the State nor the County have been able to implement enforcement practices that can adequately regulate wastewater systems. Protection of the Planning Area's water resources from further contamination and maintenance of historic stream flows in the La Cienega Creek and Santa Fe River are critical aims of this Plan.

### **Problems:**

1. Increased commercial and residential development pose a risk of ground water contamination due to the large number of septic systems, improperly functioning septic systems and pollution from increased runoff.
2. Commercial and residential development create a risk of surface water contamination through increased runoff from impervious surfaces due to the potential for pollution from roadways, parking lots and increased turbidity in surface water from increased flow.

3. The Planning Area is located at the lower end of the Santa Fe River watershed as well as the La Cienega and Santa Fe River watersheds. The area's natural springs and groundwater supplies are hydrologically connected to both underground and surface water flows. This interconnectedness of water systems leads the area's environment to be sensitive to alterations in natural water flows, water withdrawals and septic or other water introductions.
4. The Environment Department enforces wastewater disposal and septic systems standards but does not always have the resources to monitor correction of violations if they occur. The County does not have the authority to consistently enforce wastewater discharge requirements following granting of development permits. This allows for the potential of septic systems being installed in the Planning Area on small lots so that the intent of protecting groundwater through existing regulations may not always be met
5. The increasing population is served mainly by septic systems. This increases the probability of future groundwater contamination through overcrowding of lots and increasing density levels that pose a risk of contamination by placing septic tanks too close to existing water resources.

**Goals:**

- Ensure adequate quality of water available for domestic and agricultural use in the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area.
- Ensure that future development protects and enhances local water quality.
- Regular monitoring to evaluate groundwater quality.
- Protection of groundwater through affordable and effective wastewater management techniques
- Ensure legal, safe recycling of wastewater.
- Safe and effective wastewater treatment systems installed in the Planning Area.
- Ensure the highest level of protection against water resource pollution and degradation from all potential commercial, institutional, and residential sources of pollution.
- Develop cooperative educational and management programs between all parties regarding wastewater disposal in the Planning Area.

**Actions:**

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**Ordinance Actions:**

*The following actions are aimed at specifically changing the County Land Development Code through the creation of legally binding regulations that will be specific to the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area*

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- A. New development that poses a risk of spills and potential to contaminate surface and groundwater systems shall not be permitted within the Planning Area. Non-permitted uses will include gas stations, asphalt batch plants and asphalt production plants, large-scale mining, any warehouse which stores or transfers chemicals, large-scale agricultural operations which stockpile manure or have manure lagoons (e.g.: dairies, horse parks or stables, chicken farms), waste oil recycling, septic tank pumping waste disposal, grease trap waste disposal, large-scale chili processing plants, cheese processing plants, gasoline storage facilities or transfer stations, auto repair facilities, car washes, sludge disposal fields, mortuaries, and slaughter houses.
- B. All new parking lots must implement water runoff control measures to mitigate erosion and pollution.
- C. All new septic tanks installed in the Planning Area shall meet or exceed existing New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) standards and be equipped with an above ground access port.
- D. When property in the Planning Area is divided, subject to a family transfer or re-zoned the landowner must furnish complete and accurate documentation to the County which demonstrates that all facilities on-site are in compliance with all New Mexico Environment Department regulations and that all necessary permits have been obtained for any and all septic and waste disposal facilities on the property.

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**Program Actions:**

*The following actions describe future programming or projects that the Community Plan identifies as important work to be addressed in the community. These are not proposed ordinances and do not outline any legal changes for land use or future development in the community.*

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- A. The community will work with the County Planning Division, Utilities Division, Hydrologist and other relevant county state, federal and non-governmental agencies to:
  - 1. require existing commercial and institutional entities which produce animal or chemical wastes that have the potential to contaminate groundwater which are located adjacent to or in the Planning Area to properly contain and dispose of all wastes either brought onto the property or generated through the entity(s) operations.
  - 2. develop design requirements for new development that control runoff into arroyos through use of retention ponds and/or other techniques that control runoff while also allowing for aquifer recharge.

3. review all road projects that may affect run-off in the La Cienega and Santa Fe River watersheds and Planning Area such as the Arroyo de Los Chamisos, Arroyo Calabasas, Arroyo Hondo and the Santa Fe River.
  4. develop a program that will assist homeowners with septic system compliance. Such a program should include education, outreach and funding mechanisms to help homeowners ensure existing and new septic systems meet NMED standards.
  5. develop guidelines and assistance for all new developments to install wastewater treatments systems which are designed to treat effluent or wastewater to 10 milligrams per liter or less of total nitrogen, as per EPA and NMED standards. This may be included as an ordinance at a future date to develop a program that allows for periodic testing of wells, springs and the Santa Fe River in the Planning Area. This will include working with the Drinking Water Bureau of the Environment Department to disseminate information regarding how individuals can test their own water, all relevant County and State regulations regarding well drilling and maintenance, as well as scheduling periodic water fairs in the Planning Area.
  6. work with the EID to develop voluntary noticing procedures whereby when new wells or septic systems are installed within the Planning Area, the land owner will provide a map of all wells, septic systems, open water courses, springs, arroyos and acequias on or adjacent to the property. A copy of the map could then be mailed to all adjacent property owners with notice of intended actions. The intent of this is to prevent accidental placement of wells or septic systems which might have potential impacts to water resources and drainage on adjoining properties.
  7. explore the possibility of establishing local financing mechanisms, such as an assessment district, to create a water and/or sanitation district to serve the Planning Area.
  8. develop a study of best management practices to ensure quality of water, wildlife habitat and beneficial use of water resources along the Santa Fe River in the Planning Area.
  9. develop a septic tank monitoring program. Such a program will require that individual septic tank sludge levels be measured every 2 years and pumped if called for by NMED standards. A biennial report examining septic tank conditions and problems in the Planning Area will be compiled and distributed to interested community organizations. This policy is intended to help homeowners ensure that septic systems will not fail, to avoid large costs of repairing failed systems, and protect surrounding water resources from potential contamination.
- B. The community will work with the County Planning Division, Utilities Division, Hydrologist and other relevant county state, federal and non-governmental agencies to coordinate with the New Mexico Environment Department and the City of Santa Fe:
1. in developing a joint information sharing and dissemination program that allows for periodic review of the City's Wastewater treatment facility operations and reports. This will be designed to allow for greater communication and cooperation between the City, the County, NMED and County residents regarding facility operations' impacts on the community at large and the communities of the Planning Area. Issues of concern to the community include but are not limited to facility design and potential for spills, reliable supplies for power generation and emergency back-ups, sludge treatment and storage capacity, and sludge field injection practices and potentials for water contamination. The above parties will investigate means to formalize such a cooperative program through development of cooperative agreements between the various parties and agencies.
  2. to ensure that quantity and quality of effluent flows from the City's wastewater treatment plant are sufficient, based on the best available data, to meet the needs of downstream water users and in recognizing priority water rights of downstream users.

## **PART 4 – OPEN SPACE**

### **Introduction:**

Settlement in the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area has traditionally been focused on rural, agricultural economies and land use practices. Communities formed along waterways to ensure irrigation for crops while upland areas were used commonly for grazing, wood collection and other purposes. This system required coordinated management and stewardship practices to maintain the common areas. The system also allowed for open lands between communities and spacing of development to allow for enough resources to support each community.

Areas traditionally used as community open spaces are being lost to new development. While these areas are often privately held, development effectively removes them from the undeveloped landscape which has traditionally been used for grazing areas, hiking and helped define individual villages by forming buffer areas between communities. The development pressures threaten the traditional rural character of the Planning Area as characterized by farm fields, running acequias and open lands buffering village areas. The open lands and buffers between development are significant characteristics of the rural, agricultural and historical identity of communities in the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area.

Open Space and undeveloped areas in the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Planning Area includes County open space property, Bureau of Land Management properties and lands managed by the New Mexico State Land Office. Open space areas throughout the Planning Area contain significant ecological and cultural resources that have not been completely inventoried or had management plans developed to date. It should also be noted that extensive study has been conducted on the adjoining BLM designated Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and that the BLM has cooperated with community members in developing management strategies. Residents of La Cienega and La Cieneguilla have always considered these lands to be integral and essential parts of the community. The Plan supports continued and enhanced joint management between community members, private landowners, the BLM, the County, and the State Land Office.

### **Problems:**

1. Lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the New Mexico State Land Office (NMSLO) currently provide open space opportunities within the Planning Area. However, if these lands should change to private ownership through land swaps or state development, they might be removed from the communities' traditional open space and buffer areas.
2. Open space areas throughout the Planning Area including the county open space, BLM lands and state lands require a coordinated, community-based management plan to maintain and protect these resources while allowing for community uses, such as hiking, horseback riding and grazing.
3. New development on private lands threatens to build over many of the buffer areas and traditional open spaces which help define the rural character of the community.
4. Use of off-road vehicles and firearm discharge/target shooting in unauthorized areas as well as garbage dumping on open lands in the Planning Area have also been identified as problems.

**Goals:**

- Protect and maintain all open space areas as an integral part of the community.
- Provide ecologically and culturally sensitive management of open spaces and trails in the Planning Area.

**Actions:**

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***Program Actions:***

*The following actions describe future programming or projects that the Community Plan identifies as important work to be addressed in the community. These are not proposed ordinances and do not outline any legal changes for land use or future development in the community.*

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- A. The community will coordinate with the County Open Space program and the Planning Division to:
1. develop a public education program to help clearly identify boundaries between public and private properties in order to respect and protect private property from non-permitted public use.
  2. create an inventory of all undeveloped land in the planning area and form a representative committee of stakeholders to develop a community open space protection program. The program should inventory all public lands as well as create a voluntary mechanism for private landowners to also participate. Such a program may employ methods including but not limited to land trusts, conservation easements and transfer of development rights.
  3. to identify existing public trails and work with private land owners, the BLM and the State Land Office to develop voluntary use agreements, easements or other arrangements for public use of these trails. This will include working with all parties to help identify trailhead locations for existing trails. This will also include closure of all unauthorized trails and measures to educate the public to eliminate trespass on private properties.
  4. to develop a voluntary notification process of all sales of open space properties identified in the above mentioned inventory. When possible, the community will negotiate a voluntary first right of refusal on sales or transfers in order that the lands may be purchased for protection and inclusion in community open spaces. This program will include exploring funding mechanisms to purchase the lands and maintain the lands.
  5. to develop an accurate inventory of wildlife habitat areas in the Planning Area and develop a management and protection program with direct participation from local residents, property owners and business owners.
  6. to identify and create a management program consistent with existing county and state regulations to preserve historical and archeological areas within the Planning Area including but not limited to petroglyphs, Pueblo ruins, and other historical sites.
  7. to develop a community-based stewardship and management program for public lands in and adjacent to the Planning Area. The management program will create environmentally and culturally sensitive programs to maintain traditional activities such as common open space areas, horseback trails, and grazing.

## **PART 5 - AGRICULTURE**

### **Introduction:**

Agriculture and irrigation have been the defining characteristics of land use and settlement of communities in the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area for hundreds of years. The presence of *ojos* or springs that formed the area's *cieneegas* or marshes have been tapped by settlers to irrigate crops, water livestock and sustain households. The agricultural and community traditions formed around acequias have defined where people built homes and how the community grew since at least the early 1600s. Collective maintenance and management of acequias was a primary basis of community governance along with stewardship of both land and water resources needed to sustain the communities. The waterways and irrigation of fields has also led to the development of unique and vibrant riparian ecosystems. The rich legacy of agricultural production in the Planning Area includes grazing in dry upland areas as well as harvesting food, herbs and tree crops along the waterways and acequias.

The valley has become an attractive bedroom community for Santa Feans looking for the rural amenities of quiet living, low traffic and open spaces. The demand created for new housing drives real estate prices up as well as property taxes on undeveloped property. Higher property taxes and low returns from agriculture create economic pressure on valley residents. The pressure encourages the sale and development of land traditionally used for agricultural purposes. Once land is converted to housing, it is virtually eliminated from future use in agriculture.

Agriculture and associated farm activities are part of the history, culture, economic base and tradition of the area. Without taking steps to revitalize local agriculture, residents fear that continued development will eliminate the option of farming in the valley and the communities will permanently lose agriculture along with the rural character of the Planning Area. Maintenance of agricultural production and protection of agricultural land are primary goals of this Plan.

### **Problems:**

1. Agricultural land, including irrigated fields, orchards and grazing areas, are being lost to new development. This significantly alters the local communities, as agricultural activities are integral parts of the rural character and historical heritage of the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area.
2. The changing agricultural economy and decreased use of agricultural lands helps encourage the conversion of farmlands for other development. A lack of education and promotion of economically viable agricultural practices exacerbates this problem for the typical small-scale farmer in the Planning Area.
3. Lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management and the New Mexico State Land Office (NMSLO) currently provide opportunities for agricultural uses, such as grazing, within the Planning Area. However, if these lands should change to private ownership through land swaps or state development, they could be removed from use in the communities' traditional grazing practices.
4. The drop in spring flows in and near the Planning Area has dramatically impacted local acequias and has made the practice of irrigation difficult because there is often less water available for irrigating than the total number of irrigable acres. Residents and long time irrigators have identified the drop in available water for irrigation as one of the biggest obstacles to maintaining agriculture in the area.

**Goals:**

- Protect all agricultural lands in the Planning Area.
- Maintain and enhance active agricultural production in the Planning Area.

**Actions:**

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***Program Actions:***

*The following actions describe future programming or projects that the Community Plan identifies as important work to be addressed in the community. These are not proposed ordinances and do not outline any legal changes for land use or future development in the community.*

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- A. The community will coordinate with the County Planning Division and other relevant agencies to:
1. develop an agricultural support program to help revitalize traditionally irrigated lands and agricultural activities such as small scale farming and ranching in the Planning Area. This will include educational outreach, skills training and marketing assistance to support economically and environmentally viable farming practices for community members in the Planning Area. The program will also include educational outreach for appropriate scale gardening and landscaping in newer subdivision areas.
  2. create an inventory of agricultural lands in the planning area.
  3. develop a voluntary notification process of all sales of agricultural land. When possible, this will include negotiation of a first right of refusal agreement on sales of said lands.
  4. form a representative committee of stakeholders to develop a community managed agricultural land protection program using methods such as, but not limited to, land trusts, conservation easements and transfer of development rights.
  5. investigate various funding mechanisms to support agricultural land protection and management programs through mechanisms including, but not limited to, improvement districts, development impact fees, grants and legislative appropriations.
  6. support public land access for grazing, as it is seen as a community tradition and directly tied to sustaining economically viable agricultural enterprises in the Planning Area.
  7. investigate means to alleviate property tax burdens for small-scale ranching and farming operations in the Planning Area.
  8. investigate means to recharge area springs in order to support traditional agricultural uses of water resources in the Planning Area.

## **PART 6 - TRANSPORTATION AND ROADS**

### **Introduction:**

The La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area is serviced by several County Roads. The Planning Area is accessed from the north by County Roads 54 and 56 and from the southeast on County Road 50. Access from Interstate 25 is provided at the intersection of NM 599, at Exit 271 and at the Waldo exit to the south, near the La Bajada precipice. The Planning Area also contains several County sub-roads and many private roads.

The Planning Area's roads are often narrow and winding. They were created over several centuries, beginning with the Camino Real from Mexico City to Santa Fe and have been continually developing to serve increasing populations while also following natural contours of the landscape and home sites.

The main source of traffic is from local residents with additional traffic generated by several tourist sites located in the Planning Area. Numerous large and small businesses and home occupation businesses located throughout the Planning Area generate additional traffic. Due to its proximity to Santa Fe, the area also receives some tourist traffic from "scenic drives" to enjoy the rural character and setting.

The County has recently overlaid Los Pinos Road (County Road 54) from the I-25 frontage road to the Las Golondrinas museum and is requesting funding to continue this work to La Entrada (County Road 50F). Additionally, the County has a maintenance request line at 992-3010 that residents can call to notify the County of road maintenance needs. Also, there is a Citizens Road Advisory Committee which meets the second Wednesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. at the County Administrative Building in the Legal Conference Room to help plan road improvements throughout the County.

### **Problems:**

1. Vehicles often travel at high speeds along the roads in the Planning Area. The majority of roads are quite narrow with sharp turns. The **high vehicle speeds** create hazardous conditions for other vehicles, pedestrians and others sharing the roadways.
2. Pot holes and poor road conditions exist on many roads throughout the Planning Area due to a lack of maintenance.
3. Roads in the Planning Area are subjected to frequent washouts and erosion damage due to runoff from the arroyos, the Santa Fe River, and other drainage sites.
4. As the area has grown and tourist destinations developed, increased traffic including large trucks and busses have created new safety hazards for residents, pedestrians and livestock on the narrow roads and lanes within the Planning Area.

5. Senior citizens, the disabled, and others who do not drive or have access to transportation lack mobility both within the valley and for trips to Santa Fe.
6. Blind and sharp curves often do not have guard rails or other protections.
7. The intersection of Las Estrellas Road and the Interstate 25 frontage road is difficult to navigate at night as it is difficult to determine whether headlights from traffic are on the interstate or the frontage road.

**Goals:**

- Improved road and bridge infrastructure that maintains the rural character of the Planning Area.
- Improved drainage to prevent bridge washouts and flooding.
- Roadways that are safe and include traffic calming measures.
- Alternative transportation systems that do not rely on auto commuting.
- Signage that maintains the rural character of the Planning Area.
- Accessible public transportation services for Planning Area residents.

**Actions:**

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***Ordinance Actions:***

*The following actions are aimed at specifically changing the County Land Development Code through the creation of legally binding regulations that will be specific to the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area*

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- A. All construction, widening and/or upgrading of public roads into the Planning Area shall be planned and designed through consultation with a representative community body and shall include design standards that meet all legal requirements while also maintaining the rural character of the Planning Area.

***Program Actions:***

*The following actions describe future programming or projects that the Community Plan identifies as important work to be addressed in the community. These are not proposed ordinances and do not outline any legal changes for land use or future development in the community.*

- A. The community will coordinate with the Planning Division and the County Public Works Department to:
  1. develop educational materials to inform Planning Area residents of the County’s notification procedures for road maintenance needs and requests.
  2. coordinate with the community representative of Area Nine (the area including La Cienega and La Cieneguilla) of the County’s Road Advisory Committee and the County Planning Division to develop a community priority list of road improvements and funding priorities.
  3. design road safety features, including but not limited to, lighting and signage that are designed to maintain the rural character of the community.
  4. identify areas with speeding problems and develop a periodic monitoring schedule with the Sheriff’s Department to enforce speed limits within the Planning Area.
  5. study the feasibility of implementing traffic calming measures, such as speed bumps, on roads with consistent speeding problems.
  6. coordinate with establishments in the Planning Area that generate high traffic volumes in order to develop either alternative traffic routes and/or event planning to minimize impacts from high traffic.
  7. study the feasibility of providing transportation services to low mobility residents through existing public, non-profit and private transportation services.
  8. study the feasibility of developing alternative transportation services including options such as ride-sharing and park and ride.
  9. study the feasibility of implementing guardrails on dangerous and sharp curves in the Planning Area
  10. work with the State Highway Department to improve the intersection of Las Estrellas Road and the Interstate 25 frontage road and create screening which will clearly separate headlights on the interstate and on the frontage road.

## **PART 7 – OVERHEAD UTILITY CABLES**

### **Introduction:**

As the communities of the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area have grown in the past few decades, the number of overhead utility cables has dramatically increased. The lines provide power and communications to Planning Area residents. However, the proliferation of overhead lines also creates aesthetically unappealing alterations to the rural lanes and scenic vistas in the area.

### **Problem:**

1. Overhead cables alter the rural aesthetics of the roads and vistas of the Planning Area.

### **Goal:**

- Enhanced visual appearance of the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area.

### **Actions:**

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#### ***Ordinance Actions:***

*The following actions are aimed at specifically changing the County Land Development Code through the creation of legally binding regulations that will be specific to the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area*

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- A. All new and replacement utility fixtures within the Planning Area must be installed underground or, if this is not possible, installed in such a manner so as to mitigate the aesthetic impact on the rural character of the community and surrounding natural environment.

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#### ***Program Actions:***

*The following actions describe future programming or projects that the Community Plan identifies as important work to be addressed in the community. These are not proposed ordinances and do not outline any legal changes for land use or future development in the community.*

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- A. The community will coordinate with the County Planning Division to:
  1. develop design and installation standards for all new or replacement utility fixtures in the Planning Area. All improvements must be designed to maintain the rural character of the community. This will include a public process for input from residents, business owners and property owners.

## **PART 8 - GARBAGE**

The La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area is rapidly growing and the increased population has strained solid waste removal facilities in the community. Traditionally, residents disposed of household waste by burning it at home. Since the 1980s, the county has managed garbage removal. Solid waste is collected at a County operated transfer station located on County Road 54 B. The transfer station is open five days per week and residents are allowed 24 trips to the station per year and additional trips are permitted for additional fees. The county transfer station serves the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area as well as several surrounding communities.

The station's location is nearest to lower La Cienega, just off of County Road 54. The location is considered inconvenient for many and this contributes to people illegally dumping garbage along roadways and in arroyos. The large service area, including communities outside of the Planning Area, brings additional traffic to the narrow, rural roads of the Planning Area. Finally, the rapid growth in recent years has increased the number of people using the transfer station. Many users are unaware of the procedures for disposing of waste or the community impacts of illegal dumping in the Planning Area.

### **Problems:**

1. The location of the solid waste transfer station on County Road 54 B generates additional traffic on narrow roads in the Planning Area. This creates safety and traffic problems.
2. The solid waste transfer station serves a broad area and results in a large amount of solid waste from outside of the Planning Area's communities being brought into the community. This contributes to problems of illegal dumping when users arrive after hours or if it is perceived to be too inconvenient to reach that location.
3. Illegal trash dumping on public and private property.
4. The impacts of illegal dumping create problems such as public health, water contamination and aesthetic detriment to the rural community character.

### **Goals:**

- Solid waste facilities and services that meet community needs.
- Elimination of illegal dumping in the Planning Area.

**Actions:**

***Program Actions:***

*The following actions describe future programming or projects that the Community Plan identifies as important work to be addressed in the community. These are not proposed ordinances and do not outline any legal changes for land use or future development in the community.*

- A. The community will coordinate with the County Planning Division and Public Works Department, Solid Waste Division to:
  1. study how well existing solid waste management practices are serving the Planning Area. This will include investigating the possibilities for a new and/or replacement site for solid waste transfer, particularly for areas on the eastern side of I-25 and communities north of the Planning Area, as well as means to finance a new station.
  2. study the possibility of opening the solid waste facility seven days per week in order to better meet the demand for waste disposal from the entire area served by the transfer station and to eliminate illegal dumping at times when the facility is not open.
  3. develop more effective enforcement of illegal dumping fines and develop regular community wide sweeps to discourage illegal dumping.
  4. develop new signage to educate people regarding illegal dumping and to deter the practice in the Planning Area.
  5. create a community program for periodic trash pick-up days in the Planning Area for large items and waste not accepted at the transfer station on private, County, State and BLM lands.
  6. initiate an annual community program “Clean-up”. This will include developing a representative community committee to coordinate local waste management activities and projects. This may also include expanding an Adopt a Road program and creating affordable incentives for community participation on annual clean-ups such as free passes to the transfer station.
  7. install containers for recycling that meet demands in the community.

## **PART 9 - FIRE PROTECTION**

The La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area is served by the Santa Fe County Fire Department and the La Cienega Fire District. Fire protection and suppression services include Emergency Medical Services (EMS), fire protection and rescue. As the Planning Area has grown, fire protection services have become strained due to the increased number of residents to serve and the lack of development of fire protection infrastructure including inadequate number of fire hydrants and water sources to fill tankers. Traditional practices such as burning fields are often difficult to plan due to increased development and inherent fire dangers from open burning. The Volunteer Fire department is understaffed and in need of additional volunteers to improve emergency response time in the Planning Area. Additionally, improvement in water availability for fire protection is necessary to address serious public health and property protection problems in the Planning Area.

There are currently eight hydrants available for use by the fire department with three connected to the La Cienega Mutual Domestic Water Association (LCMDWA) lines, one connected to the County water system and four at the Sunrise Springs facility. The three hydrants connected to the LCMDWA system do not have adequate water pressure to meet fire protection standards and only service areas of Lower La Cienega. The hydrant connected to the County system also is located in Lower La Cienega and is too distant from the majority of the Planning Area to provide timely fire protection service. The Sunrise Springs facility is currently upgrading their system to include a total of seven hydrants, booster pumps and a 500,000 gallon storage tank that will be available for community emergency uses primarily in the Upper La Cienega area. There are not any hydrants located in La Cieneguilla. Improvement in emergency water supply capacity is a main goal of this plan.

### **Problems:**

1. The communities of the Planning Area have seen a dramatic increase in population over the past two decades. The increase in residents and home sites has outstripped fire protection infrastructure development. This has led to a lack of accessible and adequately functioning fire hydrants throughout the Planning Area.
2. Five of the eight working fire hydrants in the planning boundary do not have adequate water pressure to meet fire suppression needs.
3. The working fire hydrants are not positioned to provide timely service to all parts of the Planning Area.
4. The La Cienega Fire District does not have enough volunteer members from the Planning Area. More local volunteer firefighters would improve its ability to provide timely responses to emergencies.
5. Developments and subdivisions in the Planning Area have been created with commitments to develop adequate fire protection services to new residences and subdivisions. The actual installation of such facilities was not often observed at the community level in the past and residents have expressed concern that facilities may not be fully developed or may not be in proper working order.

6. Permits for burning agricultural fields are necessary for local farmers yet are difficult to plan due to potential conflicts with residential developments that have been built in the community.
7. The manure pile located at the Santa Fe Downs facility is subject to spontaneous combustion. The current owners have taken concrete steps to permanently remove the decades of waste generated before they purchased the site. However, the spontaneous burning creates a fire danger to the surrounding community and will continue to do until it is completely mitigated.

**Goals:**

- Improved fire safety throughout the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area.
- Increased membership of Planning Area residents on the La Cienega Volunteer Fire Department.

**Actions:**

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***Program Actions:***

*The following actions describe future programming or projects that the Community Plan identifies as important work to be addressed in the community. These are not proposed ordinances and do not outline any legal changes for land use or future development in the community.*

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- A. The community will coordinate with the County Fire Department, Utilities Division and Planning Division to:
  1. investigate means to increase water pressure in existing fire hydrants. This may include but is not limited to connecting existing hydrants to the County water system and/or other available water systems at the earliest possible date.
  2. identify additional public and/or private water sources and to develop use agreements in order to meet emergency service needs in the Planning Area.
  3. develop an implementation and funding plan in order to expand the number and location of accessible fire hydrants throughout the Planning Area. This may include, but is not limited to, construction of water storage facilities for emergency use in the planning area. Improvements must be designed to maintain the rural character of the community and will include a public process for planning input from residents, business owners and property owners.
  4. assess the capacity and working order of existing fire hydrants and develop a repair and or replacement program for hydrants which are not in proper working order.
  5. assess fire access conditions in the planning area and develop a community education program to ensure proper access conditions on roads, driveways and gated drives and roads within the Planning Area.
  6. ensure that developments and subdivisions in the Planning Area meet all commitments to create adequate fire protection services. These commitments should be fully developed and in proper working order to service new residences and subdivisions.
  7. increase volunteer fire fighter recruitment from within the Planning Area. This will include an educational campaign to increase awareness in the Planning Area of the need for volunteers and options for volunteering.

8. increase fire protection awareness in the Planning Area. This will include an educational campaign to inform residents of current County Code requirements as well as practical measures that residents can implement to improve fire protection.
9. plan for coordinated permitting and burning of agricultural fields. This will include working with the local Acequia Associations to coordinate burns and provide support to fire personnel.
10. ensure that fire protection is available for addressing the spontaneous burning of manure piles until the waste is removed and ensure that similar stockpiling of manure does not occur in the future.

## **PART 10 - AIRPORT**

The La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area is located directly south and southwest of the Santa Fe Municipal Airport. The airport was established in the 1950's and has expanded over the years as the region has grown. The airport currently serves as the main air traffic facility serving commercial, private and military aircraft in north central New Mexico. All of the populated areas in the Planning Area are within a 5-mile radius of the municipal airport. Flight patterns for landing and departing from the facility regularly direct aircraft over the Planning Area.

The communities of La Cieneguilla and Upper La Cienega are located directly adjacent to the airport's southern boundary and a large portion of the Planning Area's population lives within two miles of the airport boundaries. These residents and communities have received rapid growth over the past two decades. Simultaneously, as demand for air service from the Santa Fe region has grown, airport operations have intensified. The proximity of these communities to the airport has led to increasing impacts from airport operations. Residents in the Planning Area have strong concerns that possible airport expansion will exacerbate the existing noise and disturbance problems. One intent of this plan is to develop stronger planning and communication between the Planning Area communities and the Santa Fe Municipal Airport in order to minimize and/or eliminate the airport's impacts on these communities.

### **Problems:**

1. The current Santa Fe Municipal Airport flight patterns and flight schedules create nuisances from noise as well as safety concerns for Planning Area residents.
2. Training exercises conducted by the Air National Guard at and near the airport facility generate noise and vibrations due to low flying helicopters and jets.
3. Expansion of airport facilities including increased or intensified use by commercial, residential and military aircraft will likely exacerbate existing noise and safety problems.

### **Goals:**

- Mitigation of airport operations' impacts on the surrounding communities in the Planning Area.
- Alteration of aircraft flight patterns to minimize flights over populated portions of the Planning Area.

**Actions:**

***Program Actions:***

*The following actions describe future programming or projects that the Community Plan identifies as important work to be addressed in the community. These are not proposed ordinances and do not outline any legal changes for land use or future development in the community.*

- A. The community will coordinate with neighborhoods and communities adjacent to the Planning Area to develop a representative community body to work with the FAA, the City of Santa Fe and Santa Fe County to:
  1. address the impacts of airport operations on surrounding communities. This representative group will work with the City of Santa Fe, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and any other relevant agency or group on issues including but are not limited to development of flight patterns that do not cross populated areas, timing of flights, placement of navigational beacons and noise abatement.
  2. develop a representative community body which will request that Santa Fe County and the City of Santa Fe jointly create a Noise Mitigation and Abatement Program at the airport.
  3. create and implement a planning process to develop all airport expansion plans.
  4. request a limit on expansion of new carriers, daily flights by commercial aircraft and non-emergency operations until a new airport plan is developed.
  5. explore options and constraints of locating an airport facility away from heavily populated areas in the county. This program action is intended as an investigative measure and does not imply any type of commitments by any party for siting of future facilities.
  6. investigate options and means for developing a scheduling process to limit regular flights to daytime hours and decrease or eliminate regularly scheduled flights after 8:00 p.m.
  7. work with the National Guard to limit or cease training flights over populated areas in the Planning Area.

## **PART 11 - COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

Development in the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area has increased in the past two decades. As the community has grown, there has been an increase in demand for a community facility. The existing Community Center is located in Lower La Cienega near the intersection of La Entrada de La Cienega and Camino San José. This facility was built in the 1930's and served as the community school for many years before becoming the community center. The building also serves as the La Cienega Fire District sub-station.

However, the existing Community Center is a small building with limited capacity for multipurpose uses. Additionally, the center is located near the southern end of Lower La Cienega and is not in a central location to serve the growing populations in Upper La Cienega and La Cieneguilla. This center is the only community facility and its limited size and location do not allow for either expansion or development of recreational facilities such as a park and playground for area youth. One aim of this plan is to develop and implement plans for a centrally located community facility to meet growing population and diverse needs of the communities in the planning area.

### **Problem:**

1. The Planning Area does not have a centrally located multipurpose community facility.

### **Goals:**

- Adequate recreational, civic and educational facilities to meet community needs.

### **Actions:**

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#### ***Ordinance Actions:***

*The following actions are aimed at specifically changing the County Land Development Code through the creation of legally binding regulations that will be specific to the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area.*

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- A. All proposed community facilities shall be designed through consultation with a representative community body and shall include low water use design and maintenance.

***Program Actions:***

*The following actions describe future programming or projects that the Community Plan identifies as important work to be addressed in the community. These are not proposed ordinances and do not outline any legal changes for land use or future development in the community.*

- A. The community will coordinate with the County Planning Division and all other relevant agencies or groups to:
  - 1. investigate means, including funding for development, operations and maintenance costs, to establish a community facility in the Planning Area. Such a facility may include but not be limited to a park, a local history center, recreational facilities for sports, and a multipurpose community meeting center.
  - 2. investigate options including but not limited to linking public facilities with acquisition and management of county open space properties and /or other lands held by public agencies within the Planning Area.
  - 3. investigate mechanisms available to include public recreational facilities to new development and/or local funding mechanisms to support maintenance of community facilities.
  - 4. develop a message board(s) for announcement of development projects to facilitate greater public notification and review of proposed development in the Planning Area. Such board(s) shall be placed in centrally located spot(s) within the Planning Area and be used for public notification procedures as outlined in this Plan.

## **PART 12 - LAND USE AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT**

### **Introduction:**

Traditionally, the rural and agricultural character of the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area has shaped local settlement and land use patterns. Communities were formed along waterways to ensure irrigation for crops while upland areas were used commonly for grazing, wood collection and other household purposes. Early settlement by pre-pueblo and pueblo communities was characterized by compact housing areas near water sources. Beginning in the 1600's, Spanish, Mexican and United States immigrants expanded development along the waterways and acequia systems as the population grew. Housing units were typically clustered in familial and community compounds. The primary land uses were for housing, irrigated agriculture and grazing. This type of land use required coordinated management and stewardship practices to maintain shared water resources and common lands or ejidos for livestock, timber and other uses. These agricultural and community traditions have defined where people built homes and how the community grew well into the 1900's.

Since the 1980's, land-use patterns have focused on expansion of housing developments in the Planning Area. Urban pressures from the City of Santa Fe's growing population as well as internal growth from settled families spurred rapid growth in the Planning Area. According to figures from Santa Fe County's 1996 Draft General Plan, the area's population has grown to approximately 155% of the ideal size described in the 1980 County General Plan. New development has been intense in upland areas near the intersection of NM State Highway 599 and Interstate 25 as well as in La Cieneguilla. Growth has also occurred in Upper and Lower La Cienega where traditionally irrigated lands have been converted to housing sites. The Planning Area has become an attractive bedroom community for Santa Feans looking for the rural amenities of quiet living, low traffic and open spaces.

Ironically, the new development pressures threaten the Planning Area's traditional rural character, farm fields, running acequias and open spaces which make the area attractive. The demand created for new housing drives real estate prices up as well as property taxes on undeveloped and agricultural property, thus encouraging more development by making agricultural uses less viable. Community members have expressed that they feel overpowered by development and a lack of local input into land use decisions. One of the primary intents of the Plan is to protect and maintain the rural character and non-urban style development that makes the area special to residents while providing for community input in future land use decisions.

### **Problems:**

1. Community residents have identified that family transfers and variances are sometimes used to divide properties below the minimum lot sizes to avoid subdivision regulations and procedures, contrary to the intent of the family transfer procedure. This allows for increased density on small lots and places higher demands on local water resources to accommodate the new development. More careful examination of the potential impacts of increased densities on local water resources as well as on infrastructure and the area's rural character is necessary before exemptions and variances are granted.

2. The rapid development and subsequent changes in land uses, primarily from agricultural to housing, impacts property values and increases tax burdens. This development has benefited some property owners, particularly in the case of large-scale developments. However, the development has also increased economic pressure on families and small-scale landowners to follow the same pattern which has led to piecemeal subdivision of the Planning Area at the expense of the community character. Community residents have identified that continued and uncontrolled development threatens to destroy the rural nature of the community. Additionally, rapid development places strains on limited local natural resources, including water.
3. The Planning Area includes four zoning districts including the Traditional Community Zoning District, Basin zone, Basin Fringe zone and Homestead zone. The maps which depict these different zones, particularly the Traditional Community Zoning District, are interpreted on a case by case basis which has led to confusion on individual zoning decisions. Thus, enforcement is complicated because of unclear boundaries between the various zoning areas.
4. Due to increased growth and concerns regarding water quality in the Planning Area, some community members have called for extension of County water and/or wastewater systems into the Planning Area. However, if these systems were expanded in the Planning Area it might be possible to increase housing densities to areas served by both sewer and water. The increased housing densities would lead to urban style intensive development which would further threaten the rural character of the communities in the Planning Area.
5. Under the existing County Code, zoning and density decisions are largely influenced by water availability and the adequacy of septic systems. This is an appropriate approach in the Planning Area due to the need to balance water resources with development. However, the rural character of the communities in the Planning Area is intrinsically linked to development patterns and zoning decisions. Community members in the Planning Area have expressed the importance of including specific consideration of important elements such as local infrastructure, traffic and other impacts of development on the rural communities along with the critically important water resources.
6. In the past two decades, zoning changes and land use policies designed for the entire County have helped to direct new growth in the Planning Area. While growth and change are recognized as inevitable and often positive, the rapid development in the Planning Area has also negatively impacted the quiet, rural character of the community. Community members have expressed frustration and exasperation at decisions and policies impacting the community in which they feel community concerns were not addressed or considered. This has led to the impression of disenfranchisement at the community level and served to discourage participation in community and County level decision-making.

**Goals:**

- Land uses within the Planning Area will protect the natural resources, historical resources and rural character of the communities in the La Cienega Valley.
- Increased awareness of the importance of maintaining rural and agricultural character of the communities in the Planning Area.
- Protection and maintenance of clean air and water as community priorities in the Planning Area.

**Actions:**

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***Ordinance Actions:***

*The following actions are aimed at specifically changing the County Land Development Code through the creation of legally binding regulations that will be specific to the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Planning Area*

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**Density:**

***Traditional Community Zoning District***

- A. Minimum lot size is three quarter of an acre (.75 acre) per dwelling. The minimum lot size shall not be adjusted down when community water and sewer systems are provided except where density transfer is used to protect sensitive lands or preserve community assets as described above and gross density is maintained.

***Basin Zone, Basin Fringe Zone, and Homestead Zones***

- A. Maximum density in the Basin Zone shall be 1 dwelling unit per every 2.5 acres.  
Maximum density in the Basin Fringe Zone shall be 1 dwelling unit per 12.5 acres.  
Maximum density in the Homestead Zone shall be 1 dwelling unit per every 40 acres  
In the Basin Fringe Zone and Homestead Zone, if a 100 year supply of water, is proven by an on-site geohydrological well test, land may be further divided to a 2.5 acre minimum lot size.  
The minimum lot size shall not be adjusted down when community water and sewer systems are provided except where density transfer is used to protect sensitive lands or preserve community assets as described above and gross density is maintained.
- B. If a single land parcel and/or subdivision lies within two separate hydrologic or zoning districts, the density of dwelling units per acre shall reflect the exact proportion of each district in which the parcels lies. For example, if a five-acre parcel includes 1 acre in the Traditional Community Zoning District and 4 acres lies within the Basin Zone, the possible density will be 1 unit per .75 acres on the 1 acre in the Traditional Community Zoning District and 1 unit per 10 acres in the Basin Zone, with proven water availability. Thus, the total density for the property in this scenario would be two dwelling units. Without proven water availability, the property would only be allowed one unit.

**Density Transfers:**

- A. Density transfer(s) should be used to protect community assets including but not limited to wetlands, open spaces, springs, watercourses, riparian areas, agricultural lands, acequias, traditional community centers, archeological sites, historical and cultural sites and multi-generational family housing compounds. This will allow developments to transfer minimum lot size densities from an entire piece of property to a specific area of the property in order to protect important community resources such as those listed above. For example if a developer chooses to develop a 10 acre tract in the Traditional Community Zoning District under permitted .75 acre lot size zoning, the county code would allow the developer to divide the land into 13 individual parcels with one dwelling unit per .75 acre parcel. Under density transfers, the developer would be able to cluster the gross density of 13 units on a portion of the property, leaving the rest of the property open and undeveloped.
  - 1) When density transfers result in higher site densities, such development shall be clustered and sited in an organic manner to fit the land features and existing rural character of La Cienega and La Cieneguilla, instead of in an urban grid pattern.

**Residential Uses:**

- A. Residential uses shall be permitted in the entire Planning Area.

**Commercial Uses:**

- A. The La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Plan supports existing and planned commercial development areas in the Highway Corridor Plan along with all requirements therein. No new commercial nodes or other commercial developments shall be permitted in the Planning Area.
- B. All new commercial establishments shall submit a water resources plan as part of the master plan review process. The water resources plan must demonstrate secured access to a 100 year supply of water as well as secured water rights to meet all current and projected demands for the business operation.
- C. The Plan recognizes that the long-term well-being of the community will require a sustainable economic base and local services which are provided by allowing the existing commercial development areas to continue to meet the needs of the community and the County.

**Home Occupations and Mixed Uses:**

- A. The Community Plan recognizes the importance of individuals and families to operate small businesses from their homes. Mixed use development consisting of development that house both residential and non-residential uses on the same property and or in the same structures shall be permitted as part of a home occupation. Small-scale arts & crafts and galleries already exist in the community as is demonstrated through the annual gallery tour. The Plan determines that home occupations are appropriate throughout the Planning Area and supports the continuation of existing home businesses and small commercial operations in the Planning Area. New home occupations shall meet the standards of Article III, Section 3 of the Code with the following changes:
  - 1) Products to be sold are manufactured on-site
  - 2) No more than four (4) persons, other than members of a family residing on the premise, shall be regularly engaged in work at the site of the home occupation.
  - 3) All parking for the residence and home occupation must be off the roadway and shoulders of the road.
  - 4) Accessory structures used for the home occupation may not be larger than fifty percent (50%) of the total square footage of the residence.
- B. Small-scale retail establishments, such as arts and crafts stores, restaurants or galleries may be permitted as part of a home occupation.
- C. Agricultural sales and roadside stands are important ways of supporting local agricultural traditions and economies and shall be permitted in the Planning Area.
- D. Other development as defined by the County Code shall be permitted with the exception that all large outdoor recreation and landscaping areas such as ball fields or other large grass areas must use treated effluent rather than potable water for landscaping and turf. Any effluent treated to meet all state and county regulations for water quality and use with public facilities.

**Cell Towers and Antennas:**

- A. Cell towers and antennas shall meet all County Code requirements.

**Family Transfers:**

- A. Because local families are one of the great community resources of the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Planning Area, lots created by inheritance or family transfer are allowed and shall meet the requirements of Article II, Section 4 of the Code.
- B. The maximum densities shall not be adjusted below those outlined in the Density Section.
- C. Any applicant for a family transfer must demonstrate a minimum of five (5) years direct ownership of the lot(s) since the last land division(s) or sale or transfer of the property before any disposition can be taken on the family transfer request. An exemption to the five-year holding period may be applied for and must clearly state how the additional family transfer lot division is necessary due to personal or family

hardship, that the request is a minimum easing of the Ordinance requirements, making possible the reasonable use of the land and that it will have no adverse impact to neighboring properties, the community or the environment. Such requests for exemption must be heard before the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Development Review Committee.

**Land Protection:**

- A. Open spaces set aside for density transfer or other easements for the protection of community assets, as described above, should interconnect to similar sites or potential sites on adjacent properties whenever possible.
- B. Developments shall design narrow roads and driveways that follow the natural terrain without creating large cut and fill areas; roads shall be designed with more natural edges, using shoulders, ditches and grassy swales rather than curb and gutter. Roads and driveways must meet all Land Development Code requirements, for example fire access and width.
- C. Native vegetation should be preserved, when possible, on development sites and local native plants used for landscape buffers and screening.

**Acequia Protection:**

- A. All development shall be set back from the six foot (6') maintenance right of way of the traditional acequias.
- B. Prior to issuance of development permits, applications for development within twenty-five feet (25') of an acequia must be reviewed by the affected Acequia Association. Such review will require a recommendation of approval or denial and/or any suggested conditions for approval. This will be a non-binding review and recommendation to help protect the local acequias' integrity and function. The review period will be no longer than 30 days and if no response is received from the Acequia Association by that time, the application shall proceed through the normal procedures. The County shall work with the Acequia Associations to develop a contact list for review of proposals.

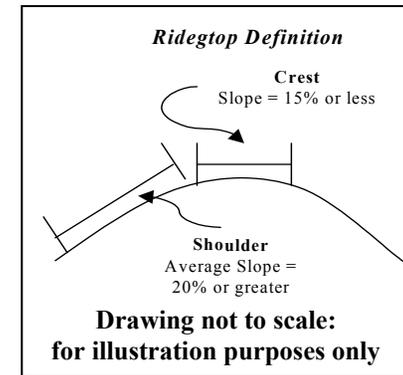
**Lot Coverage:**

- A. For residential uses, the total roofed area of principal and accessory structures shall be no more than twenty percent (20%) of the total lot area. For example, a  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre lot would accommodate approximately 6,500 square feet of structures and a 2.5 acre lot would accommodate approximately 21,700 square feet of structures.
- B. For non-residential uses, the total roofed area of principal structures, accessory structures, roadways/driveways and parking facilities shall be no more than sixty percent (60%) the total lot area. For example, a one acre lot would accommodate approximately 25,200 square feet of commercial lot area.

- C. Whenever density transfer is used to create open space which is protected in perpetuity by easement or other legal means, lot coverage shall be calculated based on the total acreage of the project rather than for each individual development lot and shall be apportioned to the density transfer lots by means of building envelopes on the approved final plat.

**Ridgetop Protection:**

- A. Building on hillsides and ridgetops will be subject to the existing County Code requirements such as setbacks, screening and buildable areas. Additionally, in order to more effectively protect the horizons surrounding La Cienega and La Cieneguilla, ridgetops in the Planning Area will be defined with a lesser slope on the sides, from 30% to 20%, and with all sides of a ridge formation being included instead of only parallel sides. The following changes shall be made for the definition of ridgetops in the Planning Area: 1) A ridge or ridgetop shall be defined as a long, narrow land form with slope less than fifteen percent (15%) that includes the prominently visible portion of a hill or mountain that sits above an area having an average slope greater than twenty percent (20%) on one or more sides.



**Noise and Lighting:**

- A. Noise and lighting standards shall be strictly enforced. All outdoor lights shall be shielded pursuant to the standards of Article III, Section 4.4.4 of the County Code.

**Water Impacts:**

- A. Prior to issuance of commercial and residential subdivision building permits, landowners must provide documentation supporting water availability and the impact on neighboring wells and make them available for public review at a centrally located spot in the community, such as the Community Center.

**Development Review:**

- A. The protection and maintenance of community assets including but not limited to wetlands, open spaces, springs, watercourses, riparian areas, agricultural lands, acequias, traditional community centers, archeological sites, historical and cultural sites and multi-generational family housing compounds should be interpreted as intrinsic community values that must be considered when reviewing all land use and development proposals.
- B. All family transfer applications shall be administratively reviewed by the Land Use Administrator. A summary of all applications shall be forwarded by fax or email to the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Development Review Committee (LCDRC) for review. LCDRC members shall have five (5) working days to review applications; no response from any LCDRC members shall constitute concurrence of the administrative decision. If a quorum of LCDRC members request in writing that the application be reviewed by the LCDRC, it will be placed

on the agenda of the LCDRC's next scheduled meeting. If a quorum of the LCDRC does not request review of the case, the Land Use Administrator will authorize the transfer application. Family transfer applications shall demonstrate that the parcel to be divided/transferred is suitable for subdivision, and follow County Land Development Code noticing requirements, and persons who write a letter of inquiry or comment regarding a Family Transfer application will be sent a letter stating the administrative decision no later than one day following the decision.

- C. When examining developments which request variances for higher densities, all applicable review bodies will include consideration of the proposed developments impact on factors such as but not limited to traffic, schools, water , liquid waste, and infrastructure as part of the development review process. The Plan states that it is appropriate for development proposals to be denied in the Planning Area if the reviewing body determines that there is a reasonable expectation, based on the evidence presented, that the development would negatively impact the community and/or surrounding neighbors.
- D. Applications for new commercial development shall submit a statement of potential major impacts to the community, both positive and negative, as part of the master plan proposal.

**Public Notice Requirements:**

- A. All development requiring notice under the County Code shall follow notice requirements as well as the following, notice shall be posted prominently on the property, building, or other structure subject to the application and be accessible from a public roadway. Notice signs shall be posted in such a way as to give reasonable notice to persons interested in the application. A laminated copy of the site plan showing existing and proposed development shall be firmly attached to the poster. The notice sign shall be removed no later than seven (7) days after a final decision has been made on the application.
- B. All applications for family transfer must follow County Code requirements and notice of the application shall be posted at Community notice boards identified by the Land Use Department.

**Community Pre-application Review of Non-Residential Zoning Applications:**

- A. Applicants for any non-residential development shall hold a pre-application meeting in the community to present the development concept and gather public comments and concerns about the development.
- B. The applicant shall publish notice of the time, place and purpose of the meeting in a newspaper of general circulation in the community 21 days before the meeting and shall mail notice to Santa Fe County, Planning Area community organizations, and to all property owners within one thousand (1000) feet (excluding rights-of-way) of the subject property. Notice of the meeting shall be posted at Community notice boards identified by the Land Use Department. The property shall be posted as set forth in this Plan.

- C. The applicant shall record the meeting proceedings and submit a written summary of the meeting proceedings and a list of attendees to the County along with the application for development. The summary and list of attendees shall be posted at Community notice boards identified by the Land Use Department.

**Community Plan Review and Revision:**

- A. Community Review of the Plan. The La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Planning Committee requests that an annual community review of the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Plan be conducted each year to assess community concerns and assist in monitoring community conditions as well as implementation of Plan elements.
- B. Formation of a Community Plan Committee to Implement and Monitor Plan. The La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Plan authorizes the County Planning Division to establish a permanent La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Plan Committee to conduct this annual review of the Plan. The County Planning Division staff will provide support and help to coordinate the process. This committee shall consist of three (3) representatives each from La Cieneguilla, Upper La Cienega and Lower La Cienega for a total number of nine (9) committee members. Representatives shall serve for two-year terms and the terms shall be staggered to ensure continuity of the planning process. Representatives shall be nominated by residents, property owners and business owners from each respective area. Nominees must be a resident, business owner or property owner in order to be eligible to serve as a representative on the committee. In the case that more than three nominations are received for each area, three names shall be randomly selected to serve on the committee. This committee shall follow the process established for community planning under Ordinance 1998-5 including consensual decision-making and open public meetings.
- C. Amendments to the Plan. Under Ordinance 1998-5, the Community Planning Ordinance, a community must approach the Board of County Commissioners to request authorization to initiate a Plan. At present, the County does not have specific requirements for the amendment of a community plan. It is the Planning Department's policy that proposed amendments to adopted plans be brought forward by a representative community body for the established planning area. Thus, the community would need to establish a representative planning committee for the Planning Area, describe the reasons for amending the plan and outline a public participation plan that assures diverse representation of community residents, business owners and property owners to review the proposed amendment(s). If an amendment to the plan is authorized, the Board may assign staff and resources to the planning process as described in Ordinance 1998-5 and the County Growth Management Plan. The La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Plan recommends that all amendments to the Plan be developed and proposed through the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Plan Committee as described above in *Formation of Community Plan Committee to Implement and Monitor Plan*. Amendments to the Plan may be proposed at any time.
- D. Area Specific Planning. The La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Plan supports the creation of area specific sub-plans within the Planning Area. The Plan requires that such efforts be conducted by requesting an amendment to the Plan as per the process described above in *Amendments to the Plan*. Additionally, it is possible for a community to request a separate community plan that would alter the Planning Area boundary to create a new Planning Area. This would require approval from the Board of County Commissioners and that the requesting group follow all requirements of Ordinance 1998-5 and the Growth Management Plan.

- E. Biennial Review of the Plan by the Board of County Commissioners. The Plan calls for the Board of County Commissioners to review the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Plan every two years in order to assess the effectiveness of the Plan. This biennial review shall be in the form of a presentation to the Board of County Commissioners by the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Plan Committee (see *Formation of Community Plan Committee to Implement and Monitor Plan*) with assistance from Planning Division staff. At these reviews, the Committee will present an update on the Plan's implementation and, if necessary, request direction from the Board on planning issues and/or new planning initiatives.

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**Program Actions:**

*The following actions describe future programming or projects that the Community Plan identifies as important work to be addressed in the community. These are not proposed ordinances and do not outline any legal changes for land use or future development in the community.*

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**Notification:**

- A. The community will work with the County Land Use Department to develop a community association list for notification of development proposals. This list shall include existing community groups who send a letter of request to be added to the list along with a contact name, address and telephone number. This list is intended for active community groups and is not intended for individuals to request noticing. The list will be updated annually.

**Mapping:**

- A. As part of the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Plan, the County will define and adopt clear boundaries of the Traditional Community Zoning District, Basin zone, and Basin Fringe zone and Homestead zone within the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Planning Area. These boundaries will be defined and updated with the best available data and shall be referenced for review of all new development.
- B. The County Land Use Department will legally survey the Traditional Community Zoning District boundary. The newly surveyed Traditional Community Zoning District boundary must be presented at a public meeting(s) for community review and comment prior to presentation and adoption by the Board of County Commissioners. All affected landowners must be notified of any proposed boundary change.
- C. The County Land Use Department will work with the GIS Department to create various scales of maps which depict the various planning and zoning boundaries within the Planning Area.

**Enforcement:**

- A. The community will coordinate with the County Land Use Department and the New Mexico Environment Department to develop a process whereby residents of the planning area will be given information regarding land use restrictions and/or requirements in order to help residents learn how they can comply with all regulations. This will be an educational effort and is not intended as a punitive program.
- B. The community will coordinate with the County Land Use Department to ensure that regular enforcement of County Code requirements is a priority for all development in the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Planning Area.

**Land Protection:**

- A. The community will coordinate with the County Planning Division to:
  - 1) develop an accurate inventory of all public land uses and leases in and surrounding the Planning Area. This will include development of a reporting procedure whereby all parties can be informed as to current and planned uses of these public lands.
  - 2) develop voluntary open space protection programs including but not limited to: clustered housing, land conservation programs, Transfer of Development Rights programs, conservation easements, purchase of development rights programs and community-based land trusts.

**MAPS:**

**Map 1: La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Planning Area**

**Map 2: La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Existing Land Use**

**Map 3: Irrigable Lands, Acequias and Water Resources in La Cienega d La Cieneguilla**

**Map 4: La Cienega Watershed**

**Map 5: Water System Service Areas in La Cienega and La Cieneguilla**

# La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Planning Area

## LEGEND

-  La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Traditional Historic Community Boundary as adopted August 14, 2001 by Santa Fe County Resolution No. 2001-117
-  La Cienega Traditional Community Zoning District Boundary
-  La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Traditional Historic Community Boundary as adopted May 9, 2000 by Santa Fe County Ordinance No. 2000-07
-  BLM Section Lines and Grant Boundaries
-  City of Santa Fe Boundary
-  GPS Roads
-  Streams and Arroyos
-  Highway Corridor Plan Area
-  BLM Land
-  State Land
-  Forest Service Land
-  State Penitentiary
-  NM National Guard



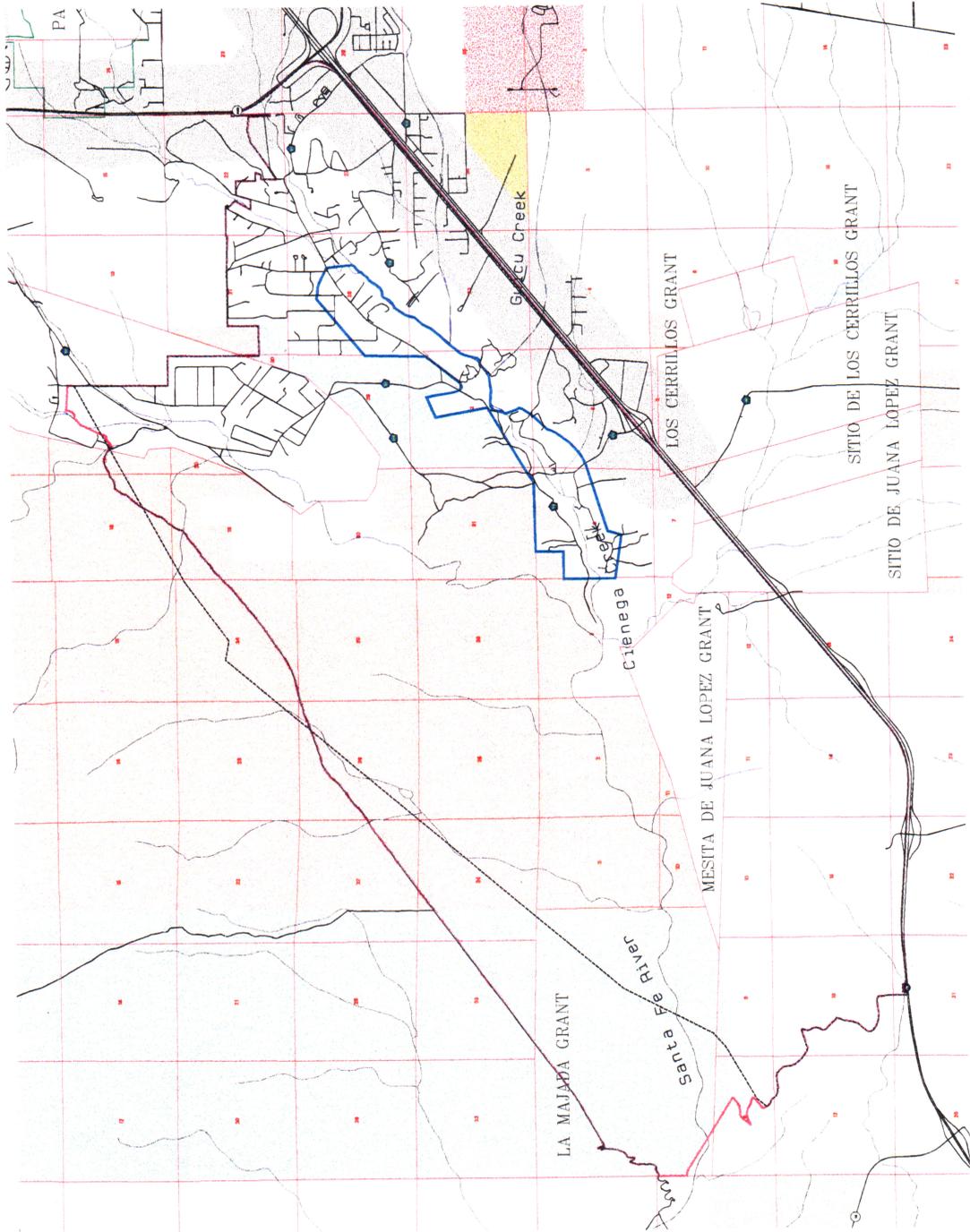
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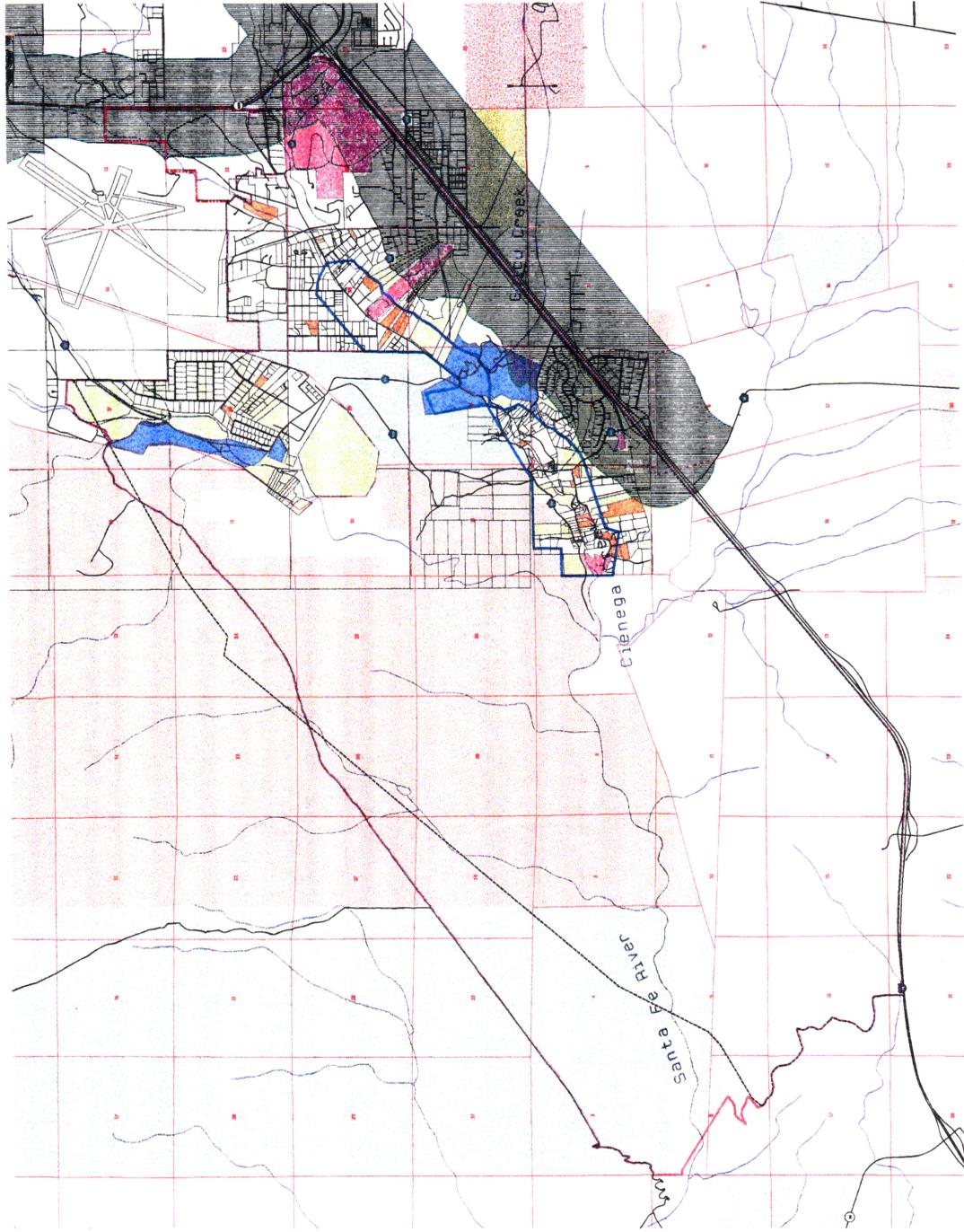
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September 10, 2001



# La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Existing Land Use within Community Planning Area Boundary



**LEGEND**

- Residential
- Commercial
- Institutional
- Home Occupation and Mixed Uses
- Vacant or Undetermined
- BLM Land
- State Land
- Forest Service Land
- State Penitentiary
- NM National Guard
- Highway Corridor District (SFC BCC Version)
- Proposed La Cienega Community Planning Area Boundary
- La Cienega Traditional Community Boundary (County Zoning Designation)
- La Cienega Traditional Historic Village (State Statute Designation)
- Portion of La Cienega Comm. Planning Area boundary as Proposed in 1997
- Parcel Boundaries - DRAFT STATUS
- R/S Section Lines and Grant Boundaries
- GPS Roads
- Streams and Arroyos



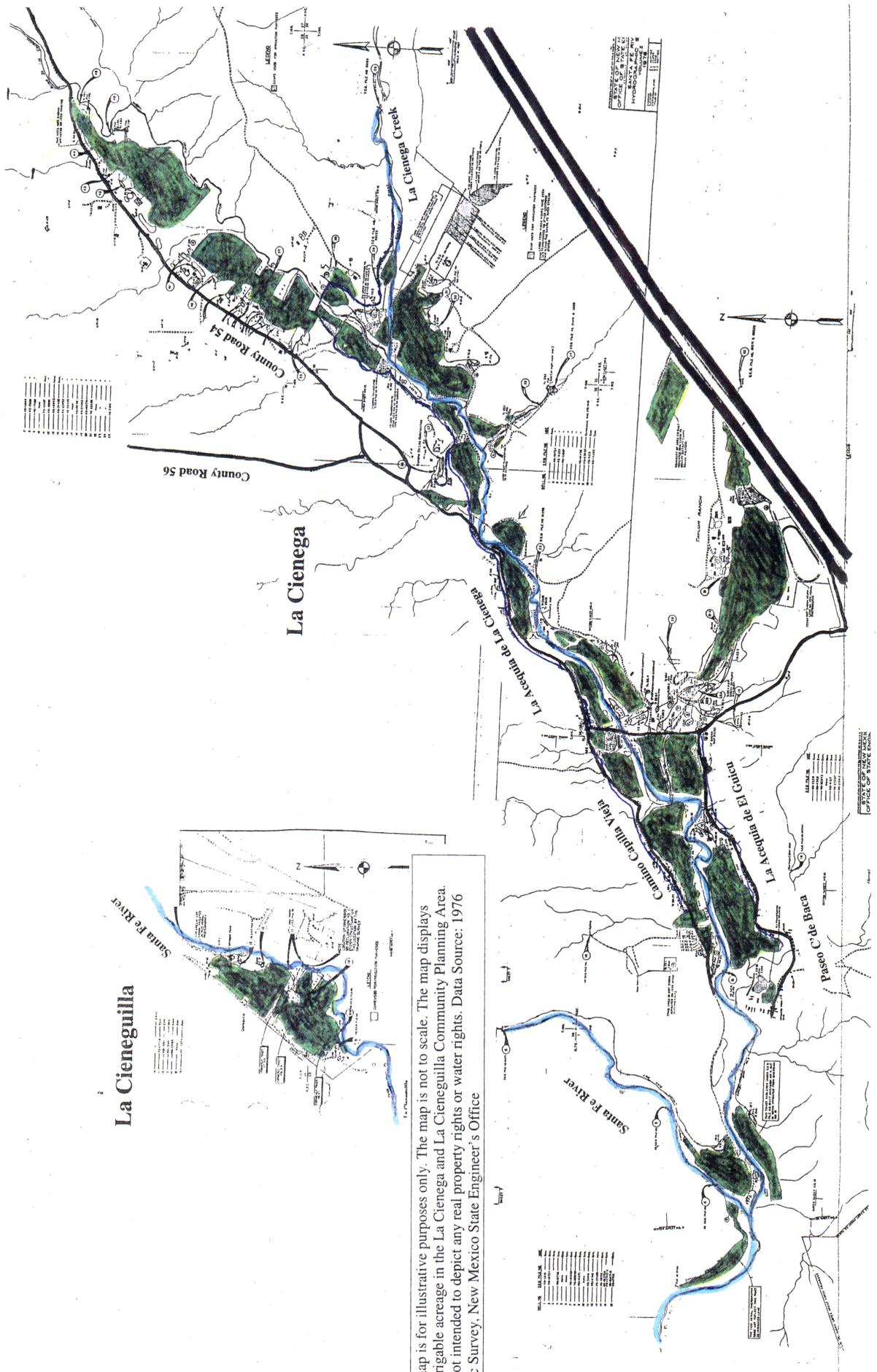
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May 08, 2001

# Irrigable Lands, Acequias and Water Resources in La Cienega and La Cieneguilla

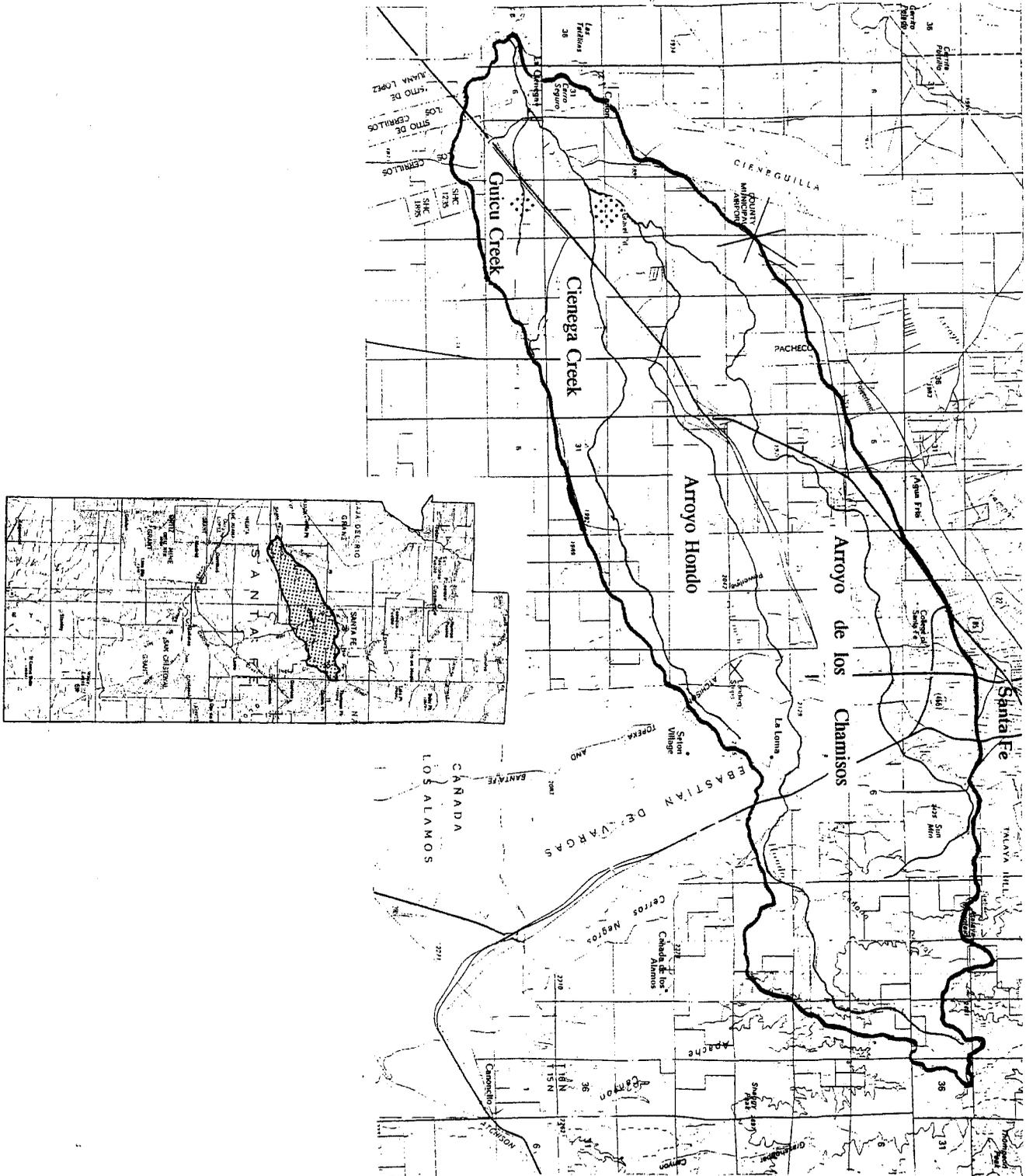


Note: This map is for illustrative purposes only. The map is not to scale. The map displays potentially irrigable acreage in the La Cienega and La Cieneguilla Community Planning Area. The map is not intended to depict any real property rights or water rights. Data Source: 1976 Hydrographic Survey, New Mexico State Engineer's Office

OFFICE OF NEW MEXICO STATE ENGINEER

# La Cienega Watershed

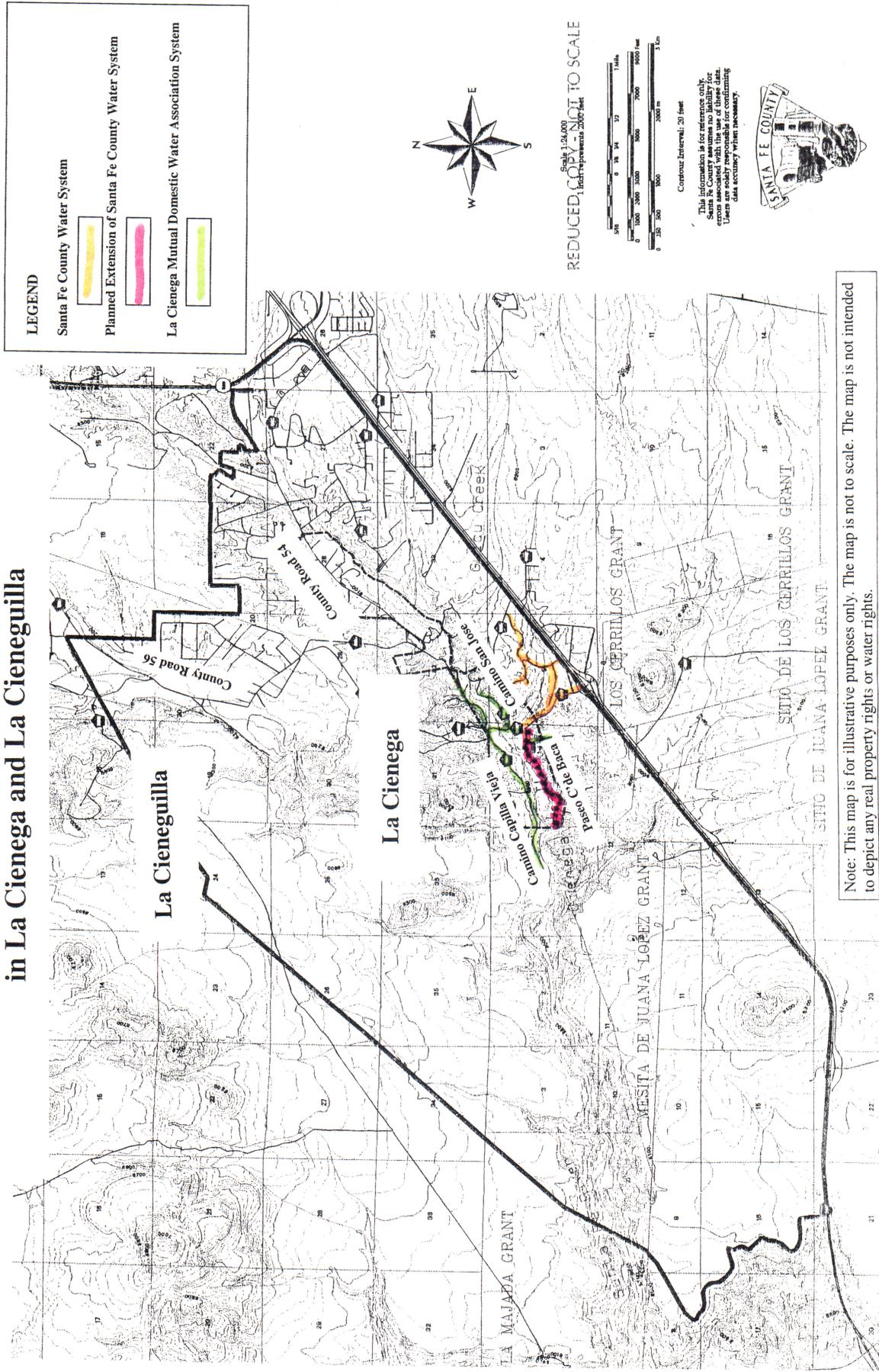
Note: map not to scale



## General Description of the La Cienega Watershed

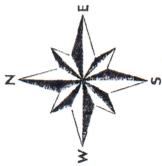
Water supply to the springs of La Cienega and La Cieneguilla comes from the Ancha Formation aquifer and the sands and gravels of the Arroyo de los Chamiisos and Arroyo Hondo. The Ancha Formation is an aquifer of high permeability and transmissivity which overlies much of the La Cienega watershed. In this area, the Ancha Formation ranges in thickness from 0 - 300 feet. Recharge to the Ancha Formation and alluvium, and therefore, the La Cienega springs, is precipitation and runoff in the upper watershed. Precipitation and mountain runoff in the eastern part of the watershed seeps into the sands and gravels of the Ancha Formation and the alluvium. The water then flows westward through the sands and gravels, but when it reaches La Cienega it surfaces as springs and seeps due to the volcanic rocks which form an impermeable groundwater barrier. Wells that tap the Ancha formation remove water from the hydrologic system that would have supplied the springs.

# Water System Service Areas in La Cienega and La Cieneguilla

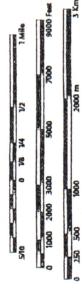


**LEGEND**

- Santa Fe County Water System
- Planned Extension of Santa Fe County Water System
- La Cienega Mutual Domestic Water Association System



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Scale 1:24,000  
Horizontal Accuracy 200 feet



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June 21, 2000

Note: This map is for illustrative purposes only. The map is not to scale. The map is not intended to depict any real property rights or water rights.